



United Proclamation of the Gospel
Proudly serving God's children gathered at:
Light of Christ Lutheran Church
St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

February 12, 2019

Subject: Visioning Team Report

Greetings and peace to you!

You may recall that in the spring of 2018 the leadership of the UPG distributed a questionnaire to our membership. This questionnaire is what prompted a vote to extend the UPG agreement to last until September 2022. Following the vote approving this extension we began a "Visioning" process in order to guide and direct our ministry efforts across the UPG.

Today, we are pleased to share with you the final report of the Visioning process! This report has been worked on by your sisters and brothers in Christ over the past four months.

There were four different "sub-teams" formed. They are: publicly proclaiming the Word of God, systems and organization, "how we would receive other large groups of people into our midst", and assets mapping for our potential ministries.

This report is being shared with our congregational councils at our February 19, 2019 meeting. This report will also be the focal point of our discussions at the "Town Hall meeting" currently scheduled for March 3, 2019 following our joint worship celebration on the St. Peter's campus (Worship begins at 9:30AM and the town hall meeting will follow immediately).

The hopes and prayers of the UPG leadership and the Visioning team is that each of us would review this document prior to our Town Hall meeting and bring your thoughts, concerns, and questions to our shared gathering so that our time together can be most productive.

We hope that you will find many of the items in this report to be exciting as we continue our shared ministry efforts. We look forward to continuing our shared proclamation of the Gospel in the world in which we live and how our Lord will guide us in the future!

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Jerry

Senior Pastor

United Proclamation of the Gospel in Bethlehem, PA

“Proclamation of the Word Sub-team report”

Major areas of Discussion for our Sub-team:

1. Worship – Variety / Number/ Offerings
2. Education – Both Children and Adult
3. Internet – Web based ministries
4. Outreach Events ie “Winterfest”
5. Other

The following general recommendations were made by the group:

1. Worship

- -Four weekly offerings currently – Holden Prayer on Wednesday evenings, 1 Saturday evening worship and 2 Sunday morning worship experiences – Continue to offer these!
- -Pursue and investigate Contemporary Worship opportunities – Survey non- church members, and members who are not “regular” church attendees to see what they might like to see in regards to day worship is offered, time worship is offered, and content of worship.
 - *(Hire outside help for alternative music if questionnaire brings additional worship – don’t place on organist’s plate)*
- -Expand or pursue further “Outdoor Worship” opportunities
- -Expand Youth involvement in the current worship celebrations – more opportunities to showcase youth during worship.
- -Coming together to celebrate worship on one campus MORE OFTEN.
- Bringing the UPG congregations together on a more regular basis
- -Pursue alternating summer worship every other week on the two campuses (one service – see how it effects budget)
- Parking is a major issue, especially at LOC – investigate ways to assist those who need help in getting to church or once they are there helping them get into the church.
- -General consensus of this leading to the UPG coming together as one united church under one roof eventually!

2. Education:

- Work on “bridging the gap” between Sunday school and worshipping community.
- -Increase Sunday School teacher attendance at worship, creating a theme of the educational programming becoming a part of worship.
- -Draw on the talents of parents to expand SS offerings to include their expertise as a part of the SS programming. Encourage parents to attend church with their children either prior to or after SS.
- More opportunities for adult education by drawing on our retired clergy members to assist with Bible study expansion and other adult alternate forms of education.

3. Outreach:

- Expand community events like “Winterfest” to two a year.
 - *Suggested “Summerfest” as an additional option held on St. Peter’s campus. Continue to invite surrounding community to the church offerings.*
- Promote the many outreach programs currently in place to our community of faith (ie Bethlehem Emergency Shelter, Food Banks, Feeding Programs)
- Expand offerings of retreats for both youth and adults based on Interest. Scholarships for Bear Creek Camp for youth.

4. Internet – Web-based Activities

- Move to one UPG Web page and have both current pages feed into the main site.
- Create twitter page for sharing and feedback between church and members
- iPads at Worship – create an app for use in worship to attract younger audiences and potential new members
- Audio and video streaming of aspects of the Sunday worship celebrations for those members out of town or not able to worship due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances.

5. Other

- The committee strongly recommends pursuing a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) designation for the Light of Christ Campus. St. Peters is currently an RIC church. This should be recommended to the church council in the new year!

Systems/Organization Sub-team Report

Keeping in mind that this is an ongoing process, the end result may look like the following. As the UPG progresses the positions can be “tweaked” to begin to create this structure

The task force recommends the following for the structure of the 2021 UPG:

UPG Church Council – one council meeting composed of members of Light of Christ Lutheran Church council and St. Peters Lutheran Church council. With votes taken only by appropriate council.

UPG Ordained Rostered Pastor (one per 150 weekly average worshippers)

UPG Christian Education/Youth /Child Care director

UPG Ministry Coordinator/Campus Coordinator

Two Administrative Assistants

- A. Secretarial...tasked specifically with creating and producing the bulletin in addition to other office duties
- B. Communication – Internet etc.

One Organist/Choir Director

Based on current structure it is recommended that the present organists travel between campuses as needed to cover vacations and emergencies.

Custodian (consider professional outside agency)

Receiving Others Sub-team Report

Other communities of faith may from time to time wish to participate in United Proclamation of the Gospel. Level of participation and the process to include them will depend on the circumstances, vision and wishes of the community involved. It may be best to begin with only Lutheran congregations or communities until we have a feel for how the process works.

1. Levels of Participation:

a) A community of faith could simply participate by reciprocal sharing of service/outreach, youth, educational and occasional worship celebrations. Current UPG outreach and educational opportunities would be made available to their members, and their similar current opportunities would be made available to members of St. Peter's and Light of Christ. Fellowship events should be planned between the UPG and the "interested community of faith" or they should be invited to participate in all/most UPG fellowship events. The "interested community of faith" may have its own pastor, interim pastor or other pastoral arrangement. Occasional pulpit exchanges would be helpful to the sense of community. The UPG and "interested community of faith" would determine appropriate or desirable sharing of physical resources. A team of "ambassadors" from UPG would maintain contact and communication with the "interested community of faith" (*more about "ambassadors" is discussed under "Process."*)

b) Full Participation/integration into UPG: The specifics need to be worked out depending on circumstances and the strengths and weaknesses of the parties. These specifics include:

i) As much as possible (as is the case in the UPG now), we will act as a single community of faith, having ministry teams that serve the entire UPG. As long as we are not consolidated/merged into one, each community of faith will have a council and officers, budget, finances and congregation meetings as required by its constitution. Unless a congregation decides to close, it will become another

campus of the UPG. Councils can meet as one body, with members of each council dealing with those matters that refer only to their congregation.

ii) Pastoral leadership: Necessary pastoral staff needs to be determined. There will be a senior pastor, and others as needs dictate. We plan to have one full time ordained pastor per 150 weekly average worship attenders. Officially each pastor will have to be called by one of the churches, but they will serve as a unified staff.

iii) Finances and material resources: The circumstances of everyone involved will determine how costs are shared. Bulk purchasing of supplies and sharing of equipment could lead to savings. This has been effective in the current UPG configuration.

2) Process of bringing another community into the UPG: When a community of faith expresses interest in participating in UPG, a team of “ambassadors” (2 or 3) will arrange a meeting with leaders of that community. This could include other members of the church/community. The purpose of this meeting would be to familiarize the “interested community of faith” with the vision and joys we are experiencing in the UPG, to get to know about the circumstances, needs and expectations of the church, and to begin to formulate a plan. Someone should take notes at this meeting and later prepare a written summary to share with leadership of the “interested community of faith” and the leadership of the UPG. The leaders should share it with their appropriate community, and receive feedback as required. This meeting will include:

i) If no one from the church has led prayer, offer a prayer for God’s guidance.

ii) Thank those attending for their interest and express excitement at this opportunity to share and possibly include them in this unfolding venture.

iii) Share the UPG Vision Statement, Motto and levels of participation.

iv) Briefly and enthusiastically describe what the Holy Spirit has been doing with us in the UPG. Include the greatly increased opportunities for Christian education and service for all of us and the magnified proclamation of the Gospel. Hand out UPG foundational document and information about educational and service opportunities we share. Do not go over these in detail. They can read them later.

v) Give those attending this meeting the opportunity to share how they see their community of faith. Ask questions such as:

- What do you like about your church?
- What educational programs do you have?
- What service/outreach programs do you have?
- What challenges are you facing?
- How many children are in your congregation?

- How many homebound? Do you have a lay visitation program?
- What are your prayers, hopes and dreams for your church?
- At this point, how do you view the UPG and your community of faith being a part of it?

vi) Emphasizing that you can't commit the UPG to any specific actions at this point, share your ideas about how some of the issues could be dealt with through the UPG. Express confidence that we can all benefit and enhance the proclamation of the Gospel by sharing in each other's ministries. We can bring in specific expertise, such as Finances, Christian Education, etc. at a future meeting.

vii) Next steps: Offer to present a temple talk at one of their worship celebrations. We need to give our leadership and members time to digest the results of this meeting, and then meet again (in about a month?) to consider next steps.

At each meeting, determine next steps and set expected completion dates.

Continuing Process: When a community of faith is ready to join the UPG, representatives of the congregation and of the UPG will create an agreement document to be presented for action by the Congregation Councils. Perhaps a "boiler plate" can be written as a starting point for adaptation to each specific situation.

Asset Mapping Sub-team Report

Anticipating the eventual clarity in vision and mission of the United Proclamation of the Gospel, the Asset Mapping Sub-Task Force has embarked on a process of collecting data with the goal of establishing a resource/asset database. This database will be available to the general membership and leadership of the UPG for reference in planning and devising action projects that express the love of God for our fellowship and the general community in which we live.

The Sub-Task Force has already begun tabulating factual information gleaned from inspections of our facilities as well as review of the various reports compiled for the annual congregational reports and parochial reports to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The inspections of our facilities, equipment, and materials/supplies provides us with a clearer knowledge of what spaces and materials we have available for the consideration of providing opportunities for creative programming and experiences. The reports to congregation, synod, and ELCA give us insight as to what already exists in terms of current activity and what human and financial resources we may have available to invest in new, creative expressions of fellowship and service.

Beyond the material assets of buildings, equipment, and supplies, the Sub-Task Force is determined to uncover the many personal assets that exist among those who participate in our community of faith. All of us have unique passions, skills, talents, training, occupations, and material resources that can or could be tapped for expanding or modifying our ministries. The

Sub-Task Force is designing a survey that we hope all of our members will consider seriously and respond with information that will help the UPG identify quality gifts of our members. Out of the richness of these gifts there is no limit to the possibilities of ministry that God can use in sharing the Good News of God's caring love for God's world that includes the City of Bethlehem, PA and the UPG. Please respond to the survey when it appears soon.

Remember, we are truly "rich" in what God has bestowed upon us. Try hard not to reflect on the UPG or its individual congregation members as the "glass half empty" but rather as the "glass half full". We, in many ways, have more than less.