

Transforming for Mission Consultation

St. Philip Lutheran Church – Dublin, CA

January 22-24, 2010

Introduction:

It has been a privilege to work with Pastor Guse, staff, leaders, and members of St. Philip Lutheran Church and School. Everyone has been very helpful in providing us with the information that was necessary to conduct this consultation. We will continue to pray that the Lord will use this report to inspire the congregation to expand the Kingdom of God.

Strengths:

1. **Choir and Music Ministry:** St. Philip sees itself as being blessed with musically gifted people who are willing to share their exceptional abilities. Through the years, the choir has been held in high regard by members, who speak of that choir with pride. Members seem to enjoy the choir's music for special celebrations as well as their regular participation in Sunday worship. Dedicated music leaders and the Worship Committee have consistently tried to meet the needs of members by offering a variety of worship settings.
2. **Caring Fellowship:** The members of St. Philip expressed great joy in their intra-church relationships. The fact that they are a smaller congregation allows them to have a real sense of family. Such events as the Wednesday Lenten Pot-lucks are seen by many as a rich time for gathering to enjoy each other and meet new people. Members seem to have a genuine sense of caring for one another, which is visible to first time visitors. This caring is then further expressed through the active role of the Stephen Ministers and a desire to not let people "get lost" from the fellowship.
3. **Location and Facilities:** The campus of St. Philip presents itself in a unique/strategic location near two major interstate highways nestled within a culturally diverse neighborhood. This growing area is ripe with opportunity for community outreach events and service. The church/school grounds have well maintained lawns and large shade trees which provide an inviting background. The sanctuary and other buildings provide functional and adequate space to meet the current needs of the congregation and allow some choices for future ministries. Several outside groups use the campus on a regular basis.
4. **Christian Education for Children/Youth:** Many church members expressed pride in and the importance of Christian education at St. Philip. A vibrant VBS reaches out to the community and engages many enthusiastic volunteers through this service. Sunday school attracts children of all ages with attendance of about 35 on a morning and room to grow. The preschool is full to capacity with a waiting list, confirming the need in the community. It has strong leadership and excellent staff. Considering the majority of children in the preschool are non-members, this ministry has excellent potential for evangelistic opportunities. The elementary school offers the congregation regular

opportunities for ministry to children and families. Changing demographics in the area provide opportunities for increased and diverse student enrollment. There is an expressed desire to provide quality youth ministry.

5. **People Gifts:** The people of St. Philip are grateful for their current staff and those who have served in earlier years. The former senior pastor, principals, vicars, and teachers are valued and fondly remembered. The present staff is recognized as important partners in the ministry. Pastor Travis Guse has made a positive beginning at St. Philip as a preacher and team leader. He demonstrates abilities to communicate, inspire, and listen, and a desire to include the ideas and gifts of the members of the congregation.

Concerns:

1. **Necessity of Managing Change:** The process of change needs to be balanced between moving ahead and respecting what has gone before. Traditions and tenures have been long established at St. Philip. Recent changes in leadership have introduced new ideas and practices that have the potential of creating fear, apprehension, and mistrust. A number of people expressed concern over the amount of change and intensity of change that St. Philip has in front of them. For some it seems “overwhelming.” Without addressing this in a positive way, there is a risk of the congregation getting overly frustrated and contentious.
2. **Absence of a Unified and Outward-focused Vision:** With the ending of an era and the advent of a new pastor, St. Philip members and staff have expressed a need for a clear, unified, and outwardly-focused vision. In the absence of a vision, the leaders and congregation seem to have busied themselves with various ministry tasks and traditions that focus inwardly upon their own direct needs and desires. Some dedicated volunteers have expressed feelings of burnout and frustration. Hopefully a strong outwardly focused vision would inspire them to step beyond “volunteerism” into ministries for which they have been gifted and called by God. This vision would also be helpful in determining a consistent worship style that is inspirational for both members and guests.
3. **Lack of Effective Fiscal Management:** Maintaining solid records and managing fiscal control is found at the core of good stewardship. Currently the church and school do not follow generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), nor do they have a clear fiscal plan, or follow effective procedures and practices. The result is a lack of many internal controls or separation of duties. There still seems to be some unresolved uneasiness from the events of five years ago regarding fraudulent behavior. This needs closure! Furthermore poor financial management has caused a lack of trust throughout the system. Those who have gifts and skills in these financial areas of ministry seem reluctant to serve.
4. **Disconnected Church/School Relations:** St. Philip Lutheran Church has sponsored an excellent Christian school which is considered by many to be a significant strength of the

congregation. Small class size, solid academics, a history of quality faculty, and the mutual support of pastor and principal were expressed. While the congregation sponsors the school there is a real disconnect between the congregation and the school. Members commented that the church has not intentionally included the school as a ministry for outreach. There is confusion over the financial procedures relative to church and school. The church members use “we –they” language when talking about the school. The school pays rent to the church as if it is an agency independent of the church.

5. **Ineffective Governance Structure:** St. Philip has a substantial pool of gifted and dedicated leaders and staff, as well as a shrinking core of willing and capable volunteers. The current governance model, however, impedes and disrupts effective mission and ministry. Members expressed concerns that leadership roles are unclear and that more volunteers are needed for effective ministry to take place. They seemed frustrated by the fact that there is no clear path of authority to accomplish a goal. There is a lack of clarity concerning responsibility, authority and accountability.

Prescriptions:

1. **Change Management Team:** Under the leadership and authority of Pastor Guse and the Council, in consultation with District staff, a Change Management Team of at least five individuals in addition to Pastor Guse, will be established to guide and manage the multiple changes going on at St. Philip. This management will include, but not be restricted to, vision, governance, and staffing. This team will be appointed by March 21, 2010, and be installed in a Sunday morning service by March 28, 2010. They will report in written form to the congregation at least once each month, to the Council as requested, and at least once a quarter at a “Sunday Morning Forum.”
2. **Outward-focused Vision:** Under the leadership of Pastor Guse and the Change Management Team, with assistance from CNH District staff, an outwardly focused vision will be developed for St. Philip Lutheran Church and School. This will include a 30 day time of prayer and discovery prior to the visioning day during which the congregation prays for their community and identifies community needs that could be addressed. By May 15, 2010, the congregation will host an envisioning workshop led by District staff to create a vision draft. This vision draft will include, but not be limited to, specific people’s needs upon which to focus, gifts of the congregation that fit those needs, and initial strategies. A final vision statement, ministry and staffing plan will be presented to the congregation for approval by September 15, 2010.
3. **Fiscal Management System:** Under the leadership of Pastor Guse and the Council, St. Philip will contract with an appropriate individual or team to revamp the entire financial system of the church and school. This contract will be in place within 30 days of the acceptance of these prescriptions, and a new system designed and implemented by July 1, 2010.

4. **Church-School Unity:** Under the leadership of Pastor Guse, in partnership with Principal Brauer, and in consultation with District staff, a plan for unification of church and school ministries will be developed. This plan will flow from the outward focused vision and will include, but not be restricted to, integrated outcomes, unified financials, staff collaboration, mutual support, and at least two new shared events per year. This plan will be presented to the congregation along with the completed vision statement and strategy by September 15, 2010.

5. **Governance:** Under the leadership of Pastor Guse and the Change Management Team, with assistance from District staff, a Governance team of at least three individuals will be established to research and develop a new governance process. Attention will be given to the “Servant Leader” model which assigns responsibility, authority, and accountability within a streamlined system. This team will be appointed by May 1, 2010 and will present a governance plan to the congregation for approval by September 1, 2011 following appropriate education, focus groups, and resource sharing.

Conclusion:

We ask the congregation to vote on accepting or rejecting this report by March 7, 2010. If the report is accepted, the District commits to “walk alongside” St. Philip for a minimum of one year to help with implementing the prescriptions. St. Philip will agree to submit monthly statistical reports to Transforming Churches Network (TCN), the national organization working with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The Transforming for Mission team recognizes the courage exhibited by St. Philip by engaging in this consultation. The team wishes to emphasize the serious nature of the challenges that the congregation faces in this changing world and the need to respond, not with fear but with continued prayer, innovation, and resolve. We believe that you have the critical mass, resources, and spirit to address these issues successfully.

We thank you for the opportunity to consult with you and it was a blessing to be the recipients of your personal sharing. Our prayers are with you as you consider these prescriptions, and we hope to be working with you as you touch the people of your surrounding community with God’s love.

Rev. Ted Hartman – Team Leader
Patrice Appold
Marty Hartman
Brenda Heideman
John Heideman
Rev. Michael Lange
Ione Tietjen
Rev. Walt Tietjen