

LCGS MVTF Final Report & Recommendations



Adopted by the MVTF March 15, 2022

David Chura
Sara Hendrickson
Cyndi Venberg
Pastor Dave Mesner
Pastor Nancy Hong

Nan Asperheim
Jennifer Julsrud
Mike Klopp
Tim Kreft
Chris McIntosh

Katie Rich
Julie Seidelmann
Paula Tsufis
Emma Johnson

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1. Introduction

From the publication “Temporary Shepherds”, Pastor Warren Schulz introduces three concepts which are connected, but not synonymous.

Change: The inevitable movement of life's forces.

Transition: The process by which we must deal with the inevitable changes of life (the interim)

Transformation: The new shape that occurs after transition, toward which change is aimed.

First some brief history. LCGS’s first Transition Task Force (TTF) was appointed in 2002. The year prior, the Sr. Pastor had accepted a call to Benson, Minnesota and an Interim Pastor, Paul Svingen, was called to join associate LCGS pastor Tim Berdahl, both provided expertise and pastoral guidance through this transitional time. The early 2000s were a period of change for LCGS. The TTF agreed that LCGS had moved from a pastoral-size to a program-size church (a description of the various church sizes can be found [here on page 7](#)) which meant that the church leadership structure might have to be reimagined and reorganized. The LCGS Mission, Vision and leadership structure we have today was the result of the work of the TTF. The [2003 Transition Task Force Report](#) provides significant additional history and detail of the work and outcomes - it’s worth a read.

So why was a new Mission Vision Task Force (MVTF) needed at this time? The 2002 TTF’s purpose was to develop a comprehensive plan as to how the LCGS congregation, staff and volunteers can best work together over the next 3 to 5 years to embrace and expand the congregation's ministry in accordance with its Mission Statement. That was 19 years and a global pandemic ago! Since that time, we know much has changed in the ways the Gospel can be shared and the ways people experience God.

The MVTF comprised the working groups detailed below and MVTF members were asked to serve on one of these three working groups.

Mission/Vision

Identify current and prospective member’s spiritual desires and personal vision for who we are, what LCGS should look like in the future, and what the role of the church should be. Review and make a recommendation to affirm or amend the current LCGS Mission and Vision statements.

Staffing Needs

Identify and prioritize staffing and volunteer needs required in order to support, develop and grow LCGS’s ministry. Review position descriptions as appropriate.

Self Study

To uncover the identity (the who, what, where, and how) of LCGS in this place (Lakeside, Duluth, synod-wide, church-wide). Using templates from the 2003 Transition Task Force Report - modifying as appropriate - gather demographic information and conduct a survey of congregation to help identify desired changes needed to move us forward. A variety of methods will be utilized including questionnaires/surveys, demographic analysis, small group forums, and one-on-one conversations.

2. Congregational and Community Input

The Mission Vision Congregational Survey included a measurable (quantitative) and a descriptive (qualitative) component. The first portion of the survey, the quantitative component, included the 15-question short survey designed by the ELCA Congregational Vitality Project to measure the “outcomes” or the results of church ministry. Vital congregations have life-changing relationships with God, one another and their community. ELCA Research and Evaluation department designed this simple, statistically reliable and valid survey that looks at the outcomes of ministry in terms of how it connects with God, each other and the world.

The second portion of the survey was the “open-ended” qualitative component where members could provide descriptions about their experiences at church as well as suggestions for the future. The survey was mailed out to a list of 457 households. The survey was also available in the Gathering Space and church office. A total of 139 responded to the survey.

Additionally, congregational forums were held to share the result of the survey and to gather additional input. One of the forums was conducted online on December 9, 2021 and the other was conducted at LCGS following the service on December 19, 2021. A total of 30 individuals attended the forums. Links for survey related documents can be accessed here:

- [A summary of the 2021 MVTF Survey](#)
- [Forum slides](#)
- [Forum feedback notes](#)

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The current LCGS Mission and Vision (see p.14) continues to be relevant today.
- 3.2. Sunday church services
 - 3.2.1. Maintain a single service Sunday schedule
 - 3.2.2. With the exception of special services like Christmas and Easter, LCGS should continue with only one church service each Sunday. At least twice a month, services should include communion.
 - 3.2.3. Explore more variety in worship music for Sunday services. For example, instead of simply offering a traditional service w/ organ or piano one week and a contemporary service the following week, consider the use of a blended worship music. Planning for the worship service music could center around asking questions like:

What are we planning this Sunday that will engage children?

What are we planning that will engage youth?

What are we planning that will engage those who love traditional worship?

What are we planning for those looking for new/creative/contemporary?

What other activities or service components could further the message and theme for the day.

- 3.2.4. Seek to limit service to one hour in duration. Additionally, sermons should strive to be no longer than about 20 minutes in length. People appreciate knowing when they can expect the service to end as they plan their day or work schedule. Further, when the service runs late it can confuse those who arrive for Sunday School as to if Sunday School is on or when it will start.
- 3.2.5. Continue to live stream worship as a priority for ministry for members and outreach to our community. Request Experiencing God Leadership Team periodically review posted videos for quality.
- 3.3. **Additional worship experiences and opportunities**
 - 3.3.1. Continue to provide mid-week experiences on occasions like the Lenten soup suppers on Wednesday nights during lent, mid-week summer “praise” services or other offsite services from time to time. Explore an outdoor Sunday evening service in summer. These experiences also create opportunities for intergenerational relationship building.
 - 3.3.2. Staff should experiment with offering a mid-week devotion (5 minute max) delivered via a video posted on YouTube and shared on Facebook and the LCGS Website.
 - 3.3.3. Continue to encourage bible study groups.
- 3.4. **Create a more welcoming environment in the church**
 - 3.4.1. Adjust the pew spacing in the sanctuary to be no less than the recommended 36” and potentially more space to make it easier to move between the pews and pass by those that are seated. This will also help create more of an atmosphere of community and togetherness. Further, additional wheelchair spaces should be made available throughout the pews.
 - 3.4.2. Explore the costs and logistics required to install Air Conditioning in the sanctuary and/or other areas of the building.
 - 3.4.3. Install better signage for church building areas (e.g. bathrooms, offices, facility map, AED, etc and at locations of building entry, top and bottom of stairwells etc.).

- 3.4.4. Consider how worship leaders and leadership teams interact with Sunday school families regarding the upstairs/downstairs comments from the survey. Do we need signs to encourage everyone either upstairs or downstairs to coffee and treats rather than having them in both or can we make sure that congregants always gather in both places? Additional options to consider include planning regularly (such as Sunday coffee hour), special events, and ministry programming with increased thought to enhancing the ability of church leadership and members of different generations within the church to personally meet and build relationships.
- 3.4.5. Start the process of becoming a [Reconciling in Christ \(RIC\)](#) congregation.
- 3.4.6. Host a series of workshops (or similar) like those provided by the NE MN Synod Anti-Racism Team and that address other peace and justice issues. <http://www.nemnsynod.org/antiracism.html> (scroll to “What kinds of workshops do you lead?”).
- 3.4.7. Enhance our website and social media presence and consider how best to do so.
- 3.4.8. Reach out to the community to identify ways we can be more of a resource for the community. Look for ways we could be more outward focused/outward mission oriented. Examples could include addressing neighborhood issues like food insecurity, student success rates, and childcare needs.

- 3.4.9. Vision Council and other Leadership Teams designate a liaison(s) to regularly seek out the wisdom and perspective of youth, young adults and young families. When Colleen Bernu spoke to our team this summer, she emphasized the importance of accompaniment. “Singling out one young person to join a leadership team feels like the opposite of accompaniment to me. Accompaniment focuses on "meeting people where they are". This may look like adding youth and young adults to a leadership team - and in some cases that may be a good fit for a particular youth. However, a stronger vision would be for leadership team members to visit Confirmation, Peer Ministry, Youth Gathering Meetings, Sunday School, etc. Meet the youth and young adults where they are, ask questions. and listen to them. (e.g. How are things going here at Confirmation? What was your experience like at the Youth Gathering? How can we help you connect more with worship?)”. An annual “youth council” meeting could also be convened to gather input.
- 3.4.10. Review and consider modernizing (e.g. online scheduling tools) church related volunteer scheduling (readings, ushering, etc.) and ministry commitment and interest inventories. For example, explore the usefulness of a tool like [ACS Realm Software](#) which integrates giving & accounting, individual & group engagement, event management and more .
- 3.4.11. Allow the congregation to more regularly provide solicited feedback after changes in ministry programming.
- 3.4.12. Consider a survey every third year to develop action items for the leadership teams to consider and report out progress during the three year cycle.
- 3.5. Request Leadership Teams review survey responses, recommendations included in this report, and develop action items and recommendations.
 - 3.5.1. Experiencing God Leadership Team
 - 3.5.1.1. How should ministry change?
 - 3.5.1.2. What should stay the same?
 - 3.5.1.3. Explore ways to better utilize and redesign the chapel for smaller services, weekly prayer, etc.

- 3.5.2. Reaching Out Leadership Team
 - 3.5.2.1. Develop an annual action plan to reach out and listen to the needs and concerns of community members. Develop community outreach programming based on these needs.
 - 3.5.2.2. How can we attract more community use of our building, kitchen, and grounds including analyzing our building use policy and rates?
 - 3.5.2.3. Determine whether to enhance staff resources for our reaching out mission (for example, hire a Deacon of Outreach Ministries to lead and organize our activities).
 - 3.5.2.4. Determine how best to add a significant (or broadened) social justice component to our Reaching Out mission.
- 3.5.3. Nurturing Faith Leadership Team
 - 3.5.3.1. How can LCGS best nurture the faith of others? How can we meet the faith needs of others where they are at?
 - 3.5.3.2. Consider redesigning the Youth room.
 - 3.5.3.3. Consider adding a guided post-confirmation youth bible study with food, etc.
- 3.5.4. Resource Development Team
 - 3.5.4.1. Propose a two year revenue and expense projection which reflects staffing recommendations and considerations included in this report.
 - 3.5.4.2. Develop a 10 year capital plan which identifies property needs and a high level estimate of costs anticipated over the next ten years (e.g. new roof, new carpet, landscaping, parking lot, furnace, water heater, etc.)
- 3.6. Review and consider a redesign of the many layered committee structure which exists beneath each Leadership Team. The [current leadership structure includes several layers](#) and is a very large committee structure which may need to be streamlined given the current size of the active church membership. The current structure may require too much time from staff and volunteer time in some cases. In addition, it's sometimes unclear what the specific roles and responsibilities and hierarchical structure is for each of these teams and committees.
 - 3.6.1. Council, Board, Team, Committee and Task Force memberships and approved minutes, including a summary of the financials, should be maintained and readily available on the church website.
 - 3.6.2. Review procedures for scheduling church leadership team meetings with the goal of increasing accessibility while also considering staff time.

- 3.7. Budget for staffing levels which support the missions and vision and recommendations included in this report while ensuring financial sustainability.
- 3.7.1. The MVTF provides the following guiding parameters for staffing consideration:

Guiding Parameters for staffing considerations

LCGS revenue will remain flat or decline in the near term at ~\$485k. Increases to an area (benevolence, staffing, building & property, etc) will require a reduction in another area(s).

LCGS should have one full-time pastor and one director of youth and family ministry and full-time office manager.

The Pastor position description will need to be revised to include core responsibilities from the current lead and associate pastor job descriptions. This may also require changes to the desired qualifications and skills.

Continue to monitor and appropriately fund keeping our building clean and adequately maintained. This includes either assisting current or future LCGS staff to earn and maintain needed licenses or, if feasible, hiring outside experts with appropriate credentials for specialized tasks. LCGS staff must gain certification in a timely manner such that the church maintains compliance with regulations.

All position descriptions will need to be reviewed and revised. Some current responsibilities may need to be eliminated and entirely new responsibilities may be added depending on congregationally adopted mission and vision recommendations.

All staff will be asked to share their ideas and recommendations for how their own role, position description, and the staff organization structure could be revised/improved.

Staff should receive performance appraisals at least annually based on updated job descriptions.

LCGS will strive to ensure all staff are competitively paid and aligned with synod guidelines based on performance, skill and experience.

- 3.8. The church's overall annual budget should reflect the realities of the present size of our active congregation and pledged giving and taking into consideration current and best practices for church operations in response to the changing dynamics of our church, community and the present issues we face.

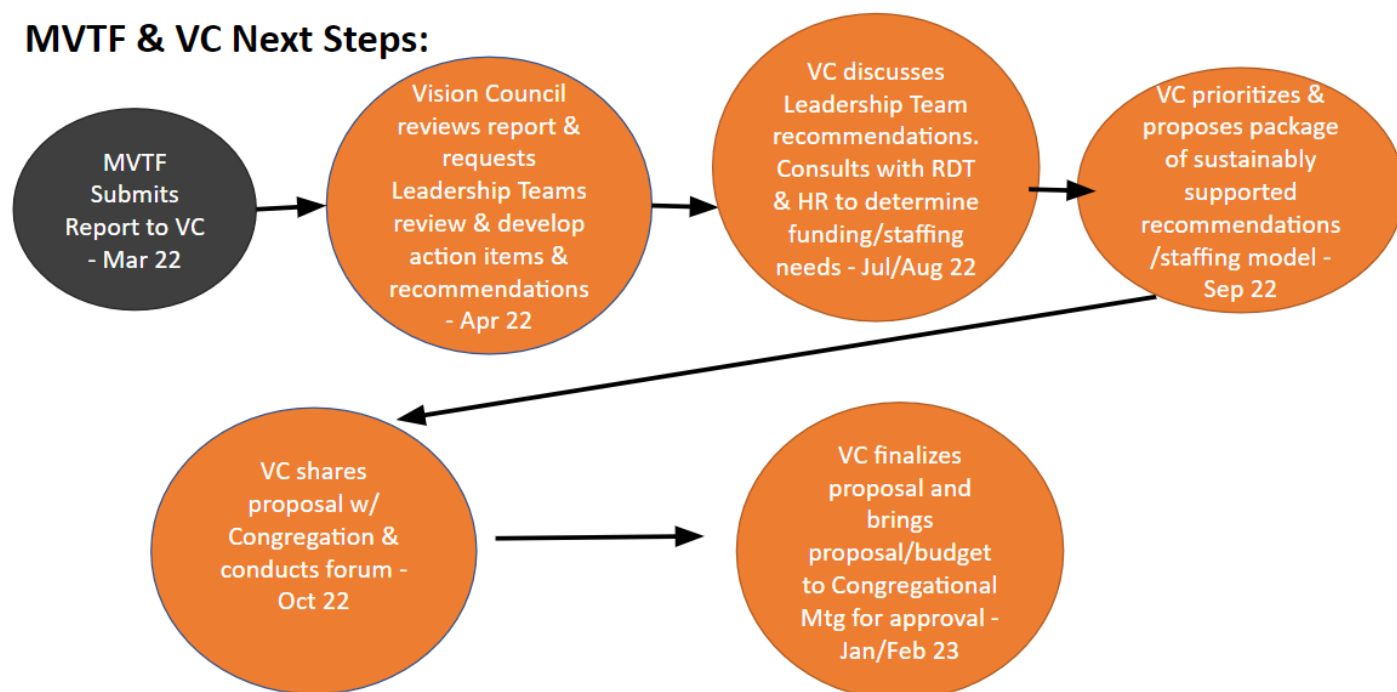
- 3.9. The Vision Council should review this report recommendations and determine appropriate next steps which may include additional congregational forums on final VC approved recommendations and a mid-year annual meeting to formally adopt any necessary changes to LCGS governing documents and financials.

4. Proposed Timeline for Next Steps

4.1. Table below can be accessed [here](#).

MVTF - VC Implementation				
ACTIVITY	~Start Date	~Complete Date	Duration (Days)	Duration (Weeks)
VC requests HR Committee conduct one-one interviews with staff	3/1/2022	3/10/2022	9	1
MVTF March Meeting	3/1/2022	3/15/2022	14	2
HR Committee conducts staff interviews	3/10/2022	3/31/2022	21	3
MVTF Final Report submitted to VC	3/15/2022	3/31/2022	16	2
VC meets to discuss MVTF final report	4/1/2022	4/15/2022	14	2
HR Committee shares summary of key findings/recommendations from staff interviews with VC	4/1/2022	4/15/2022	14	2
VC requests Leadership Teams review survey responses, recommendations included in this report, and develop action items and recommendations.	4/15/2022	6/15/2022	61	9
VC receives reports/feedback from Leadership Teams on recommendations for implementation.	6/15/2022	7/8/2022	23	3
VC meets to discuss Leadership Team recommendations and consults with RDT and HR committee to determine funding and staffing needs requirements	7/10/2022	8/31/2022	52	7
VC prioritizes recommendations and proposes a package of recommendations which can also be sustainably supported based on historical and forecasted revenue	9/1/2022	9/30/2022	29	4
VC shares proposal with Congregation	10/1/2022	10/5/2022	4	1
VC schedules and conducts forums on proposed recommendations	10/1/2022	10/16/2022	15	2
VC meets to discuss forum feedback and finalize the proposal	10/16/2022	11/22/2022	37	5
VC Schedules Congregational meeting to formally adopt recommendations and revised budget	2/1/2023	2/15/2023	14	2

MVTF & VC Next Steps:



5. Appendix

- 5.1. MVTF Meeting Minutes
 - 5.1.1. [2021-07-19 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.2. [2021-08-12 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.3. [2021-09-20 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.4. [2021-10-19 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.5. [2021-11-16 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.6. [2022-01-06 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.7. [2022-02-16 Meeting](#)
 - 5.1.8. [2022-03-15 Meeting](#)
- 5.2. LCGS Survey
 - 5.2.1. [Survey Responses](#)
 - 5.2.2. [Reflective question responses](#)
 - 5.2.3. [Survey](#)
- 5.3. [2003 Transition Task Force Report](#)
- 5.4. [LCGS "Blue Book"](#) - Summary of current mission, vision, vision council and committees
- 5.5. [LCGS Constitution, Continuing Resolutions and Bylaws](#)
- 5.6. [LCGS Leadership and Committee Structure](#)
- 5.7. [LCGS MVTF Guiding Principles and Norms](#)
- 5.8. [Notes from "The Post-Quarantine Church"](#)
- 5.9. Resources shared by Dn. Bernu
 - 5.9.1. [Stewardship resource](#)
 - 5.9.2. [Accompaniment](#)
 - 5.9.3. [Thriving beyond COVID](#)
- 5.10. Barna Research Links
 - 5.10.1. <https://www.barna.com/research/current-perceptions/>
 - 5.10.2. <https://www.barna.com/research/a-year-out/>
- 5.11. Carey Nieuwhof Links
 - 5.11.1. <https://careynieuwhof.com/how-to-keep-leading-and-growing-when-10-20-or-40-of-your-church-disappears/>
 - 5.11.2. <https://careynieuwhof.com/new-exodus-4-reasons-so-many-people-including-christians-have-suddenly-left-the-church/>
- 5.12. Faithful Innovation Online Community (Luther Seminary)
 - 5.12.1. https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/faithful-innovation-online-community-fall21/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=sharpspring&sslid=MzM2NDYwMzIzMjc3AAA&sseid=MzI2sDS1NDE0NAEA&jobid=07e4848f-2f2b-4968-97a7-0be4cb9f61df
- 5.13. Demographics and Financial Data
 - 5.13.1. [LCGS Financial Status Overview](#) and [Charts](#)
 - 5.13.2. [Edina Realty Neighborhood Report](#)
 - 5.13.3. [ELCA 55804 Report](#)

5.13.4. [ELCA 55805 Report](#)

5.13.5. [2003 Task Force Report Demographic & Financial Data on pages 24-36](#)

Our Mission:

At Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Duluth, MN, we believe that our purpose is to make disciples of all nations by going, teaching and baptizing. Jesus' Great Commission inspires our Mission Statement:

**We are a Community of Christ
experiencing God,
reaching out,
nurturing faith.**

We gather around God's Word and the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. We reach out locally in the Duluth community and globally with the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We nurture the faith of each member of our community in a life-long curriculum of discipleship. Our deepest purpose is to love God and our neighbor with all of our heart.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and reaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Our Vision:

We are an active community of Christ.

We experience God through meaningful worship, fellowship and study. Inspired by God's word, we form loving, prayerful relationships with one another.

We reach out with compassion and share the love of Christ. We actively care for our neighbors, locally and globally. We accept all people and open our hearts to the needs of others.

We nurture each person's faith by bringing God's word into their lives, trusting it to give new life, hope and meaning. We create faith-nurturing experiences for all ages in church, home and community.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, our lay and clergy leaders prepare each of us to follow God's call. our unique gifts, interests and passions are celebrated and effectively and faithfully used in the mission of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd.