

**Strategic Planning Committee**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**October 4, 2021**

**In Attendance:** Pr. Chris, Steve Frei, Chair, Sarah Iverson, Sara McCormack, Jen Holmer, Alan Halverson, Tom Golden, David Vogt, Brenda Wilcox and Kristin Wiersma from the Joshua Group.

**Unable to Attend:** Stephanie Barth and Angie Rieger

The meeting opened at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom by Chair, Steve Frei. Tom led the group in a devotion centered on James 4:13-15. The devotion focused not on why church's develop strategic plans, but how to plan. Our strategic plan cannot be self-serving, but needs to focus on God's work. We have to be flexible relative to our approach and timing and let God lead us. Approaching this process like a business might is not the answer, but may be part of the answer.

Sara made a motion that was seconded by Pr. Chris to approve the minutes from the September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. The motion passed.

Steve reviewed the near term schedule for the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).

- October 11<sup>th</sup> – the SPC is invited to attend the Vision Collaboration meeting with the Board, Directors and Committees at the Verona Campus at 5:30 p.m.
- October 19<sup>th</sup> – the SPC will meet at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom to continue sharing major points from the research done
- November 8<sup>th</sup> – the SPC will meet at 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. in person to discuss themes from the research, review the GSLC mission and vision and begin the conversation on our strengths and opportunities
- November 22<sup>nd</sup> – the SPC will meet at 6:30 p.m. and finalize any topics not covered on the 8<sup>th</sup>

As a follow up to one of our discussions on September 13<sup>th</sup>, Steve reiterated that the Strategic Plan will be inclusive of both campuses. We discussed that certain strategies and tactics may be targeted to one campus vs the other.

The meeting then shifted to a review of the major points uncovered during our research.

**Brenda** – interviewed engaged GSLC members; Blackhawk members

- Worship service is the critical spiritual growth component. It's where the majority of members and guests participate. Sermons need to help us understand what the Bible is saying for our lives today. Music is also important and we have to be open to different styles.
- People want to develop relationships. Ways to accomplish this include Bible studies, committee involvement, care for others, children's programs and consistent interactions at the campus they attend.
- We need to welcome people where they are. People are questioning their faith. Some are disillusioned by past church experiences. We need to live and speak authentically.
- We need strong children's programs.
- Service is a key mission element.

**Sara M.** – interviewed unchurched

- People are disillusioned based on their past church experiences. However, they are still spiritual. They feel the church is not supporting their spiritual development.
- They have found ways to serve outside the church.
- The discussion tended to be around the “church” vs. “Jesus.”

**Sarah I.** – interviewed youth that are no longer engaged with GSLC

- They feel they are not reflected in the congregation. They feel they were being pigeon-holed into areas based on their age.
- They sense hypocrisy. There are a lot of “church” activities vs. responding to what God is calling us to do.
- They want to develop spiritually. They feel they can do this without the church. How does the church affect my spirituality?

**Sarah I.** – interviewed new members to GSLC

- Easy accessibility (on-line), lots of variety (worship) and many resources (classes and programs) – that comes with a bigger church.
- Met consistent staff and worshippers at particular services which demonstrated a solid and trustworthy community. Hospitality was very authentic (though not consistently cited).
- Consistent messaging of the Gospel – very grace focused. The worship language (welcome, blessings, etc.) as well as the “extra” worship opportunities acknowledged the situations going on in the world. Not pretending things weren’t happening.

**Tom and Steve** – interviewed Pr. Bill Withers of Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines

- Constantly look to growth the body of Christ
- Keep the focus on the Gospel and thus the importance of not using the pulpit as a platform. “Stay out of the ditches.”
- Leadership development of internal leaders is important. They select the individuals for leadership development.
- Data is of growing importance. For example, they measure their on-line presence (1.8x IP address, if connected for 30 minutes)
- Future is beyond our walls
- Hospitality is important. “Welcome must be off the charts.” Used Disney hospitality training.

**Jen** – interviewed John Terrill of the Upper House

- Focus on developing healthy leaders. Give them accountability, but give them support. Train others.
- Gospel is central to what we do. How can a person not love Jesus?

**Alan and Steve** – interviewed Dr. Brooke Petersen of LSTC

- Needs of the people – people want to be connected to something larger than themselves. People not presented with changing power of the Spirit.
- Needs of the community – address racial equity and climate health
- Leadership needs to be bottoms-up vs. pastor-led
- To embrace something new, move forward with intentional process of grieving.

**Alan and Steve** – interviewed Pr. Nick Zook of Concordia Lutheran

- Be in the community – identify needs and meet them. Examples are the GSLC food pantry and clothes closet. Concordia addressed day care.
- Important to build alliances within the community and with other churches
- What are we called to do vs. what we can afford to do
- Needs of two campuses may be different.
- While service programs will provide visibility, they will not always directly connect to growth.

**Steve** – interviewed Pr. Craig Mowrey of Walnut Hill Church

- Church is competing with everything else. Need excellence in worship.
- Since not all pastors have the same gifts, consider a team approach and divide responsibilities.
- Having strong lay leaders is very important and it takes a formal training program to develop leaders.
- Prayer needs to be the center of the strategic planning process.

**Steve** – interview with Ryan Panzer

- Hybrid ministry (on-line + in-person) is essential, but it may not be a “growth” strategy.
- Efforts at church growth face considerable headwinds in this cultural moment.
- The working definition of “active” church members is changing.
- Congregations may require separate paths for:
  - Active members
  - Interested neighbors
  - Digital connections

This discussion will be continued at our October 19<sup>th</sup> meeting with input from Stephanie, Angie, Pr. Chris and Kristin.

Jen graciously offered to lead the devotion on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m. with the Lord’s Prayer.