

**Salem Lutheran Church  
Strategic Plan  
(5-year plan)**

**Situation Analysis**

Objective: *To grow the impact of Salem Lutheran Church by serving more people on a spiritual basis within and outside the church.*

Like most traditional churches in the United States, Salem Lutheran Church has seen a decline in its membership in the last 15 years. The decline in baptized members and confirmed members are both slightly over 30% since 2006. Annual giving has risen from \$648.30 per member in 2006 to a high of \$1588.00 in 2016. Since that time, it has declined to \$1130.94 in 2020.

The reasons for reduction in church membership are common among mainline Protestant churches. Many former members have adopted a lifestyle which does not include worship. Their lifestyles, which may include personal, business, and family responsibilities, have lowered the priority of church attendance and participation. The rise in giving per member at Salem is probably attributable to the change in demographics in this area. Specifically, many retirees have moved into this area. Their involvement in the church has raised the contribution per member accordingly. There has also been a reduction in the number of youth and young families at Salem which may also be the result of the influx of retirees into the church meaning the younger families don't feel comfortable among the retired.

Another reason for the decline in membership may be due to the changes in communications over the last 15 years. In this time, face to face communications have declined in favor of electronic means whether it would be texts, email, or video. In our efforts to build and sustain the growth of the church, we are encountering new and unique challenges in which we need assistance.

One of the ways for Salem to seek out people is through our Outreach program. This program is very broad and well-known helping people in need or transition to get back on their feet. Although this program has been very successful in providing physical needs to community members, we have identified a need to improve on providing spiritual assistance to those community members. We believe that with proper spiritual leadership, we could increase our membership and influence in the community.

Another way to seek out people is through our Faith Formation. This includes drawing families with children into our congregation. It also includes reaching out to individuals who do not have a church home or are looking for a new one. This may include current residents, people moving into the area, or those who spend the summer in the area.

## History of Salem Lutheran Church

Founded by Swedish and Norwegian immigrants, the first worship service of the Deerwood Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church was on Christmas Eve 1889. At first the congregation would meet in small groups at various homes. Later they were fortunate to have ministers come from neighboring towns. In the early days the Swedish and Norwegian people each had their own services with their own pastors. It is unknown when the separation ended. The first church building to house the congregation was built in 1898-1899, with the first service held in the partially completed church on September 3, 1899.

In 1959-1960, a new church building was erected on the original site of the church. As the congregation grew, so did the church, with additions being built in 1977 and 1988. The years had taken its toll on the building and discussions were held on the possibility of a new building. While other possible sites were discussed it was decided that this church should stay in Deerwood. In July 2010 the present building also incorporated pieces of the first and second church buildings in the form of a stained-glass window from each building.

In 1997, a congregational mission statement was drafted and adopted. **Our Mission at Salem Lutheran Church** *"We exist to **welcome** people to Jesus Christ, **equip** people with faith that works in their lives, and **send** people into the world in Jesus' name."*

On Christmas Eve 2014, while not officially celebrated, Salem achieved its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

There have been many changes in the demographics of the church and area over the years. Early history showed many larger families, some second or third generation, attending. Currently, there are smaller families although some extended families remain. Historically, Salem has been an older congregation. Currently, much of the congregation is 50+.

Music has been a longstanding tradition at Salem, with the first choir being formed in the early 1940s. Today, in addition to the choir, Salem also has a Praise team and a handbell choir.

Youth involvement including Sunday School classes, confirmation, and Vacation Bible School has also been an important part of Salem. The first confirmation class was held in 1891 and the Sunday school classes occurred as early as 1898. While participation trends have fluctuated greatly over the years, the congregation still strives for growth and a renewed interest in this area. Currently, a low percentage of the congregation is under age 18. Vacation Bible School has been an overwhelming success for years, drawing children from the community and even from other churches depending on their own Bible School schedules.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Prioritized Challenges**

- 1) Declining congregational population
- 2) Declining budget/capital fund
- 3) Lack of children/youth in our demographic mix
- 4) The way people use weekends
- 5) Operating costs
- 6) Personnel/Wage structure
- 7) Retiree population
- 8) Church oversight to Outreach
- 9) LGBTQ position
- 10) ELCA
- 11) Summerfest

### **Prioritized Opportunities**

- 1) Welcoming congregation
- 2) Active volunteers
- 3) Music program
- 4) Community activities (Lunch Bunch & Daycare, for example)
- 5) Retiree population
- 6) Outreach opportunities
- 7) Opportunity to communicate services
- 8) VBS
- 9) Men's/Women's retreats
- 10) Affluent church
- 11) Better facility
- 12) Meeting opportunities
- 13) Opportunity to use facility/fellowship hall
- 14) Summerfest
- 15) ELCA

**Objective:** *To grow the impact of Salem Lutheran Church by serving more people on a spiritual basis within the church, locally, and worldwide.*

**Strategy:** Transform Outreach to be more intentional in serving and addressing the spiritual needs of its clients.

**Tactics**

- 1) New permanent leader (DO or Deacon).
- 2) Provide spiritual support to clients at the time of interaction.
- 3) Provide literature to support our commitment to spiritual growth.
- 4) Provide volunteers opportunities for spiritual growth and support.
- 5) Investigate other services to support those in need or transition.
- 6) Offer incentives to clients to use the Mustard Seed.

**Strategy:** Seek opportunities to connect with potential members.

**Tactics**

- 1) Re-institute Welcome Committee
- 2) Contact new residents in community.
- 3) Contact residents for Outreach.
- 4) Continue utilizing Facebook and YouTube.
- 5) Find ways to connect with those utilizing Facebook "Digital Pastor."
- 6) Make facilities available to the public.
- 7) Offer community activities.
- 8) Offer daycare.
- 9) Offer other youth activities.

**Strategy:** Energize the enthusiasm of the congregation.

**Tactics**

- 1) Conduct annual survey,
- 2) Conduct annual or semi-annual call-a-thons.
- 3) Lead discussion groups on issues of the day.
- 4) Conduct family events.

**Strategy:** Develop a vibrant youth and family program that draws people in and helps them to grow.

**Tactics**

- 1) Create outreach activities that invite participation from the community, such as Kid's Club, community open gym at Auditorium, Trunks for Treats, church softball team, etc.
- 2) Develop deeper relationships with and between Salem youth through activities such as inter-generational events, ski trips, campouts, lock-ins, weekly breakfast

before school, synod and ELCA Youth Gatherings, attending school events, Facebook connections, etc.

- 3) Help young people grow into their faith through Sunday school, confirmation, mentor programs, inter-generational activities, worship participation and leadership opportunities service projects, etc.
- 4) Create events that will give young people opportunities to develop and act out their faith, such as Honduras or Youth Works service projects, Trunks for Treats, VBS leadership, sound booth training, providing music in worship, etc.
- 5) Create opportunities for youth to grow as leaders such as worship leadership, peer ministry training, serving on the synod LYO, etc.

**Strategy:** Develop a Christian education environment that will nurture a congregation-wide culture of lifelong learning.

### **Tactics**

- 1) Continue to create quality elementary age Faith Formation ministries such as Sunday school, Kid's Club, VBS, etc.
- 2) Expand jr. and sr. high Faith Formation ministries beyond confirmation, encouraging young people to learn by doing, with activities such as sr. high breakfast/Bible studies, Sunday school and VBS leadership training, worship leadership opportunities, etc.
- 3) Create young-adult Faith Formation opportunities such as week e-devotions to college students, encouraging and empowering service as Bible camp counselors, "Theology on Tap" style gatherings, etc.
- 4) Encourage lifelong adult Faith Formation by forming adult small groups (Mom's groups, Nifty 90s, etc.), Bible studies, retreats, in-home meetings, etc.
- 5) Provide service opportunities for people to act out their faith such as "God's Work, Our Hands" Sundays, Bible camp service days, Outreach ministry opportunities, small group leadership, Volunteer appreciation events, etc.

**Strategy:** Improve the financial and organizational structure within the church.

### **Tactics**

- a. Audit—Perform internal audits annually and each five years hire external audit firm.
- b. Responsibility: Treasurer/Exec Team and Financial Advisor.
- c. Timeline: First Five Year External Audit January 2022.
- d. Deliverable: Audit Report in Spring of 2022.
- 2) Wages and Personnel. Rectify wage vs salary issues with respect to position description/roles/responsibilities.
  - a. Responsibility: CWG
  - b. Timeline; 2022 Budget Process Aug-Dec 2021.
  - c. Deliverable: Compensation Package to Budget Process.
- 3) Get Salem's Church and Outreach personnel policies up to modern HR standard incorporating expert advice
  - a. Responsibility: Executive Team.

- b. Timeline: January 2022 to complete in June 2022.
  - c. Deliverable: Updated Personnel Policy Guide published, accepted and incorporated into Salem Policies.
- 4) Ensure SLC and Outreach hired personnel are commensurate with SLC's and Outreach's needs.
  - a. Responsibility: Executive Team and Director of Outreach.
  - b. Timeline: Continuous starting with CWG and Budget Process Aug–Dec 2021.
  - c. Deliverable: Staffing levels and quality commensurate with SLC's and Outreach's needs. Reported monthly at council meetings.
- 5) Outreach–Continue to strive for Outreach to be nearly self-sustaining.
  - a. Responsibility: Outreach Governing Board.
  - b. Timeline: Continuous starting with CWG Budget Process Aug–Dec 2021.
  - c. Deliverable: Construction and execution of sustainable Outreach budget.
- 6) Cost of doing SLC business–Explore cost-cutting/efficiency gaining shifts in expenses such as exploring better insurance options, IT/Phone service options, building and landscape maintenance options, etc.
  - a. Responsibility: Finance Team and Financial Advisor.
  - b. Timeline: Continuous starting with CWG Budget Process Aug–Dec 2021.
  - c. Deliverable: Expenses within planned budget.

**Strategy:** Continue improvements to facility

**Tactics**

- 1.) Install LED lights in the parking lot.
- 2.) Install more efficient lighting in the church building.

**Strategy:** Expand worldwide connections

**Tactics**

- 1) Support Honduras mission activities.
- 2) Support missionary in Liberia.