

4/21/16

Report to the Church Council

Consultation with Resurrection Lutheran Church, Alpena, Michigan

Recap:

John Diamond contacted me and asked if I would be willing to come to this congregation to consult as they consider entering into the process of calling their next pastor. The date was set, the agenda established and the consultation began on Tuesday evening, April 19, 2016.

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

I met with the church council and staff members at 7:30 pm to discuss the document that I had submitted for this consideration and input. The conversation focused on just three of the questions: Characteristics of leaders, Vision and mission, and making disciples.

A consensus seemed to develop on two primary areas: the congregation was very committed to two service opportunities—the School of Music and Feeding Children. The other point of consensus was around the need for greater and deeper spiritual growth.

The three areas that those participating saw as strengths in the congregation are: Mission and Service, Self-Reliance and Self-Sufficient, and Giving and Generosity. Worship and Hope was the next highest scoring area. One area that many saw as a point of growth/area of weakness: Compassion and Shepherding.

Wednesday, April 20th, 2016

Beginning at 8 am, I met individually with people to hear of their opinions on a variety of topics regarding the ministry of the church. Generally my questions included the following: how long have you been a part of the ministry here, what do you think of the four preachers process, how do you understand the role of the pastor, what kind of growth do you see in the ministry here, does the congregation experience some degree of unity, how is it working to be in a rented space and what do you see for the church in the next 5 years. While these questions were on my list, they did not always get covered given the conversation that took place. I was more interested in what people had to say, then getting answers to my questions.

Over the course of the day I met with 11 people, only one person on the schedule was not able to come, the spouse of a couple who had to stay home with a sick child.

Generally I heard the following:

How long have you been part of the ministry here? All but one person had been with the congregation since and before it's beginning.

The four preachers process? Most of the people appreciated hearing the different voices, two of the preachers were more liked than the other two. One person thought that attendance was affected by who would be up front.

Congregational unity? Everyone except for one person noticed that there were still loyalties to previous church bodies. Most however seemed to believe that those loyalties were fading.

Rented Space? For some, probably half the people, saw the current location to be a real strength and one that would continue to work for the foreseeable future. Others that expressed that it was a great interim location. I got the impression that there was interest in ultimately finding a more permanent home for the ministry, but there was no pressing need at this point.

The next 5 years? This question seemed to give me the most blank stares except to offer a standard response that hoped that the church would grow. When pressed about that, a couple people said they did not want the congregation to get so big they wouldn't know everyone, did not want multiple services and had concerns over losing the sense of family. One person hoped that there would be more family with young children/youth ministry would expand.

Some random comments: Some talked about the role of the pastor hoping that there would be movement to a call committee. One person thought that one of the primary groups of people not currently connected to a church were inactive and former members of the Roman Catholic church. I sometimes asked about average age of the congregation and that is information that people are unaware of.

Finally, the power-point that I used for the evening meeting is still on your computer and is yours to keep.

Comments:

1. The structure you have developed seems like a good way to engage people in the work of ministry, without sitting on committees to talk about ministries. The directors, in time, as the ministry grows may need support to carry out the supervision of ministries. One of the most effective ways to do so is to hire administrative help initially. Ultimately, you may have to hire more directors.

The truth about any structure is about the people. You can have a great structure with poorly placed people and it will not work, and you can have great people in a poorly designed structure and they will probably still get the work done.

2. I met four of the staff people that you currently employ. As far as I can tell these are great people. Herb and Linda do a great job of what you have asked of them, you may want to encourage them to train and equip others to join with them in the ministries that have been assigned. Julie Wood, in my opinion, is a tremendous asset to the congregation, Stacey has a great passion and heart for her ministry as well.

3. The congregation generally seems to trust the leadership team in this time of transition and this is vital to maintaining and growing the ministry into its next chapter.

Recommendations:

1. Joe Diamond, after completing his term on the church council should be appointed by the church council to continue meeting with the staff as a "staff coach" and staff liaison to the congregation/church council.

2. Before the next pastor is called, the congregation should develop a "pastoral ministry accountability team" made up of at least three people, one from the call committee, one from the congregation at large and one from the church council. At the acceptance of a call, the team would meet twice monthly for the first 6 months. After one year, the pastor can add or replace one person of his/her choosing. After one year, the accountability team will meet as needed, but no less than four times annually.

3. Reports should be made to the church council and congregation regarding the trend of worship attendance over the last 6 years, membership, and average age. Other trends can also be reported like numbers of adults in learning opportunities, numbers of people involved in the two primary service opportunities and the numbers of adults in weekly Bible study.

4. An "ad hoc" group of the church council should begin working on a "vision statement". I believe that your real mission statement is "We are called to be the face, hands and feet of Jesus". You might build a vision statement on the components of that statement, for example: "we" might speak to the idea that every person is called to serve Jesus with their whole life—and so lift up the priesthood of all believers (it's not about the pastor doing all the ministry, but leading the efforts to train and equip), the "face of Jesus" meaning the mercy and grace we find in Him, the hands in service and the feet to "go" make disciples of all nations. Then describing what it looks like to be a disciple at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Alpena.

5. At some future time the church council will need to form a call committee by whatever means determined by your governing documents. I would recommend that the members of the call committee be appointed/nominated by the church council.

The members of the call committee will develop a congregational profile—much has happened in the last 6 years and you are not the same people as you were then.

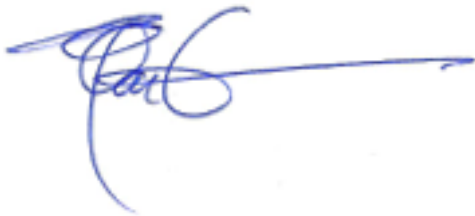
It is my recommendation that Julie Wood should be appointed to any future call committee as a staff representative and would have an "ex-officio" role—voice but no vote. This might also be a good spot for your out-going chair person, John Diamond.

I would recommend that when forming a call committee you also appoint one of those people to be the primary communicator to the congregation of its progress, giving regular updates to the congregation upfront on Sunday mornings.

I recommend that at the same time you form a prayer team that has as its specific task to pray for the call process: the members of the call committee for discernment, for the pastor who will ultimately be called for sensitivity to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and for the members of the congregation as they wait...patiently. I would have them meet once a week together.

You might also then contact Pr. Steve Lien, our Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry to see about either hosting or attending a call committee coaching workshop. These have been extremely helpful for members of call committees helping them to effectively navigate the call process.

It has been a privilege to come along side you in these days of transition and if there is anything else that I can do, or questions that I can answer, please don't hesitate to reach out to me---you know how to get a hold of me for sure!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Vander Tuig', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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