

Assessment Tool

A Mission-Minded Congregation

Our troubled world desperately needs Jesus. At our 2021 convention, the ELS adopted a five-year plan called, “Tell of Jesus and His Love,” which encourages outreach and evangelism for every congregation in our synod. How is your congregation doing in this regard?

The following statements address areas of ministry that are important for a mission-minded congregation to consider. Evaluation of what we are doing as God’s servants and what we are *not* doing (but *could* and *should* be doing) is the first step toward a more



positive and aggressive ministry of nurture, outreach and evangelism.

The pastor and lay leadership (i.e. members of the Church Council, members of a particular committee, etc.) are, first of all, asked to read the statements (numbered 1 through 9) and, on a scale of 1 (weak/poor) to 10 (strong/great), indicate the level of your congregation’s awareness and/or preparedness regarding this particular area of ministry. Place your consensus rating on the blank provided. Then go back over the points under each of the nine statements and place a check mark (✓) in front of those items that are already in place and functioning. Next, answer the more specific questions (numbered 10 through 18) that address your congregation’s current outreach and evangelism efforts. Finally, list your congregation’s strengths and weaknesses under questions 19 and 20. This will help you begin thinking of ways both to build and improve on them.

1. Recognizing that the #1 entry point for unchurched people is frequently the Divine Service, our worship service is “visitor/user friendly.”

RATING: _____

- A warm and friendly welcome by pastor before service begins
- The bulletin is worship-oriented rather than announcement-oriented; easy to follow without “insider language” (such as BLC, HLC, TLA)
- No surprises...a first-time worshiper will know where we are and what we’re doing
- A first-time worshiper is made to feel comfortable about offering (or non-offering)
- A single aim and theme for the worship service
- Sermons that are Biblical, Christ-centered, practical and illustrated
- The liturgy is taught and explained (e.g. “We now sing the Venite, which is Psalm 95 set to music. Simply follow the numbers.”)
- Possibly a children’s message (especially if yours is a family-oriented congregation)
- Available cry room and rear pews designated for families with small children.
- Singable hymns and special music (choir, solos, etc., if possible)
- Post-worship engagement and a process for identification of prospects for follow-up

2. The Word of God is the foundation of the Church. Christian education is conducted in our congregation with purpose; namely, to bring about continuing spiritual growth in God’s people, and to prepare God’s people for service in His kingdom.

RATING: _____

- Members recognize they are “servants” in the home, at work, in the community and the church
- A planned curriculum is in place to assist people in their journey of faith and service
- We work at getting more people involved in Bible study (personal and corporate)
- More than one Bible study is offered in more than one style and setting
- Each Sunday Bible class is a unit to itself with a theme and purpose so that a newcomer can fit in
- Bible study is a part of each organization’s meetings (including Church Council)
- Members bring people to Pastor’s Bible Information/Adult Confirmation course
- A new Bible study group has been started in the last two years
- People are given opportunity to identify their gifts and talents and to use them in Christian service inside and outside the church
- Families are assisted with resources, classes and events in the spiritual training of their children

3. The leadership team (pastor and lay leaders) is the pace setter. A “we’re all in this together” spirit and attitude is practiced and is evident to the congregation.

RATING: _____

- Leaders are models in the Word (attending worship and Bible Class)
- They know and seek to carry out the mission of the church
- They exercise a Christlike servant spirit and joy in their work
- There is a good mixture of older and newer members on the leadership team
- Leaders work at trust and consensus building
- They are encouragers
- They plan the work and work the plan
- They practice redundant communication
- They have a “bias for action,” that is, a desire to get the job done rather than just talk about it
- They foster a “climate of permission,” which encourages new ideas in keeping with the theology and purpose of the church
- There is an annual leadership training retreat

4. Planning is important so that we might have a pro-active (future-looking) congregation both for inreach and outreach.

RATING: _____

- There is a long-range plan and/or planning committee
- We know our community (demographics) and are planning ministry to match
- Brainstorming in different ministry areas is practiced for broad-scale participation and ownership
- We have a written, displayed and practiced mission statement
- We know who we are (theology) and where we’re headed (vision)
- We know why we’re headed where we are (philosophy of ministry)
- We know how we’re going to get there (strategy)
- We have goals for ministry this year and action plans to carry it out
- A yearly calendar of ministry activities is visible
- We evaluate our programs and overall ministry regularly and annually

5. God has called us not only to *grow* in the Word but to *go* with the Word into the world. Therefore, outreach ministry is an important part of the life and budget of our church.

RATING: _____

- Members own the mission of the church and desire to seek the lost
- A growing percentage of the budget is for outreach work
- We generously support the worldwide mission work of the Synod
- Evangelism callers are recruited and trained for law/gospel visits with prospects
- Friendship witnessing is taught and practiced regularly
- We have “go” strategies (e.g. food drive, booth at local festival, canvassing, newcomer outreach)
- We have “come” strategies (e.g. special services, events and activities planned for inviting FRANs)
- We have an outreach culture: The outreach mission of the church is regularly modeled, preached and taught by pastor and leadership
- Outward focus is regularly incorporated into the church’s prayer life
- We have attractive and cost-effective publicity and advertising in the community

6. New members are eagerly received and assimilated into the ongoing life of the church.

RATING: _____

- New members are meaningfully received into membership and introduced to members
- New members are intentionally plugged into an ongoing study of the Word
- Existing organizations are sensitive and open to newcomers
- New members are given opportunity and encouraged to use time, talents and treasures to praise God and serve others
- We have an assimilation coordinator to see that “it happens”
- New groups are started to assimilate and involve new people
- We use a “sponsor program” for nurturing prospects and new members
- Interviews are conducted at 6 and 12 months to see “how’s it going?”

7. The congregation and pastor’s expectations are clearly communicated to **new** members.

RATING: _____

- Besides doctrine, Adult Confirmation Class (or BIC) includes modules on expectations and attitudes
- Expectations on church attendance are clearly communicated to new members

- Expectations on Bible class attendance are clearly communicated to new members
- Expectations on Sunday School and Confirmation for new members' children is clearly communicated
- Expectations for offerings are clearly communicated
- Availability of Pastor for free marriage and other counseling is made known to new members
- Christian attitudes toward other members and church life taught to newcomers (e.g. seeing church as a country club vs. a "servant of Christ/servant of others" attitude)

8. Visitors look on the outward appearance and so externals are important in attracting non-spiritual people. We have one chance to make a good first impression. How are we doing?

RATING: _____

- Signs: attractive, readable, well placed
- The building and grounds: well kept, strikingly attractive; neat, clean and joyful in appearance
- Greeters: to welcome people before (outside at door) and after service
- A warm, friendly and caring people: greet people first (before joining a "holy huddle")
- A resurrection faith: joyful, upbeat pastor, leadership and people
- Harmony and unity are evident in the church's life

9. Knowing that many people who are looking for a new church initially conduct online searches, we have a strong online presence.

RATING: _____

- Website has been designed/redesigned within the last five years and looks professional - photos, fonts, etc.
- Website is regularly updated: calendar, recent sermon videos, Christmas invites removed 12/26, etc.
- A visitor to our website will see the inside of our church and fellowship area during worship and activities
- Livestream service is attractive, usable, and well-produced with clear audio
- Devotional videos, memes, and/or updates are posted multiple times weekly to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.

- We have a budget for boosting posts to social media
- Texting and email services are utilized in communicating with members and prospects

10. Who is in charge of outreach and evangelism at your church?
11. How many outreach calls does your pastor make each month?
12. How many outreach calls do you laypeople make each month?
13. What kind of prospect follow-up systems are in place at your church?
14. How many people have taken Adult Instruction (or BIC) at your church in the last five years?
15. How effective is your congregation at getting an audience from people in your community?
16. If someone were to ask people in a five-mile radius around your church how your church has loved them and served them in the last five years, what would they say?
17. What are the most important social issues in your community? How could you find out?
18. What would it take to change the way your church conducts outreach and evangelism in order to get a larger audience from people in your community?

19. List two (or more) strengths of your congregation. How can we build on these?

20. List two (or more) weaknesses of your congregation. How can we improve on these?

Name of Church and Location:

Name of

Pastor/s:

J. Radloff 3/26/01; Updated B. Kerkow 12/13/21; Updated C. Eisenbeis 06/29/23