

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church Transition Team Report

AUGUST 2022

TRANSITION TEAM

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1. Summary

Following the resignations of Pastor Courtney Steitz in August 2021 and Pastor Michael TeKrony in March 2022, a Transition Team was formed to rediscover and renew our sense of identity, purpose, and values as a congregation. These discoveries are documented below. This report represents the work done by Transition Team to help in preparation for the call process.

The means of rediscovery of our identity, purpose, and values were pursued as follows:
(Specific results from March- July feedback can be found in “Questions and Answers”)

- In January and February, Pastor Julie Brooks held six listening sessions on Zoom prior to the Transition Team being formed. Topics discussed were the departures of Pastor Steitz and Pastor TeKrony in order to process wonderings and grief; the identity and purpose of Holy Shepherd; hopes and fears; and the character and promises of God.
- In February and March, the Transition Team studied the book *How to Lead, When You Don't Know Where You're Going* by Susan Beaumont and engaged in spiritual practices together.
- In March and April, weekly questions were issued during worship, and congregants responded with sticky notes in the narthex following worship. Topics discussed were: Where is God/ how do you experience God? What do you/we fear? What is truth and how do you know? What is power? The Lent prayer room was hosted by Transition Team members.
- In May, a questionnaire was distributed and discussed at a dinner gathering. Topics were centered around the core values of Holy Shepherd, who we feel called to serve, and reflections upon meaningful moments as a congregation.*
- In spring and early summer, members of the Transition Team met with various ministry groups to discuss and share thoughts around Holy Shepherd's core values and identity, and to share meaningful moments as a congregation.
- In July, a question was asked during worship to understand what would inspire the congregation to invite others to Holy Shepherd.
- In summer, sermons reflected values identified, and the designated “open time” during worship allowed congregants to reflect deeper upon those values.
- In August, given notification of Karen Novess' upcoming retirement, the transition team and council gathered to talk about church leadership and staffing configuration.

** Knowing and affirming values and why Holy Shepherd exists creates resilience and a springboard for imagining and enacting future activities for the sake of God's love for the world.*

The Transition Team found that Holy Shepherd's values fall under three major headings: Community, Faith, and Service. We reaffirm that our Mission and Value Statements accurately represent our identity, values, and purpose. See the section **Where We Are** for more information.

Holy Shepherd has many strengths to nourish and ideas to pursue as it prepares for its future. See **Where We Are Going** for additional information.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the Transition Team:

Pastor Julie Brooks, Annette Gillcrist, Carol Rossini, Sue Scott, Chris Stuberg

2. Where We Come From

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church was formed as a mission church in 1954 with 245 baptized members. After meeting in the Masonic Temple and Eiber Elementary School, the church was built at 9th and Kipling in 1956, a semi-rural farming area at the time. Over the years, the building has expanded to accommodate its ministry growth while the City of Lakewood has expanded around it, making the area primarily suburban with sections of urban development.

Our Neighborhood

Within approximately three miles of Holy Shepherd, there are 83 faith-based organizations. These include Baptist, Buddhist, Catholic, Christian Science, Church of Christ LDS, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Science of the Mind, and non-denominational organizations.

There are seven Title I elementary schools within the same area. Within one block is Lakewood Senior High, which is designated an International Baccalaureate school. In addition, Colorado Christian University and Red Rocks Community College are nearby.

There are also a number of businesses, ranging from banks to garden centers to commercial stores, as well as a variety of non-profits such as The Action Center, and government installations including the Federal Center, Lakewood Library, and Metro West Housing Solutions.

Our Membership

Membership grew rapidly in the first decade of the congregation's formation and steadily until the early 1990s when there were 1256 baptized members. Since then, the congregation has experienced a slow but steady decline in membership marked with periods of plateau or small growth. Presently, there are 353 members.

Worship attendance for the majority of the congregation's lifetime has been at about 35% of the membership. However, in the last 5 years, attendance has steadily increased to 71% of its membership.

Of the current members, many have been active in Holy Shepherd for a long time. Seventy-five percent of Holy Shepherd's members have been members for longer than 10 years, while 25% of its members have been members longer than 30 years. Fifty-nine percent of its members are over 60 years old.

Demographically, the congregation is 95% White, which is in contrast to the Lakewood community that is 70% White and 23% Latino/Hispanic.

From 1954 until 2022, Holy Shepherd has had fourteen called pastors. Of the last three, two served the congregation for 17 years and 19 years.

The last couple years have brought about significant changes in how Holy Shepherd lives out its mission. Most, but not all, of these changes were made due to restrictions around the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to 2020, Holy Shepherd offered three weekly worship opportunities. But in March 2020, gathering together became problematic due to the pandemic. Worship was then pre-recorded and streamed from YouTube. Despite the online format, participation in their creation and viewing was remarkably high. When we were able to gather for worship once again in April 2021, two services were offered. These two services were later consolidated into one service while worship continued to be live-streamed and recorded on YouTube, which has continued to be very successful.

Wednesday Night Life, a longstanding ministry providing meals and education, was discontinued due to gathering restrictions. Likewise, Prime Timers, Prime Time Choir, and Children's Sunday School were also discontinued.

Other ministries such as the Lectionary Bible Study, the Writers' Group, the Men's Fast, and others adapted by moving to meeting virtually, outdoors, or in spaces that allowed adequate social distancing. Despite the circumstances, some ministries saw an increase in their participation. Some have decided to continue to meet online. Overall, ministry groups that have continued to meet have grown in their resilience.

3. Where We Are

Our Values

The Transition Team synthesized hours of conversation and reflection into a core set of values that mirror those of Holy Shepherd.

Word and Sacrament

Holy Shepherd is a community grounded in prayer, with Christ our Savior as head. We have an appetite to always grow deeper in our relationship with our Lord through learning and the reading of the Word. Therefore, we continue to emphasize growing in relationship with God and one another through learning and understanding the Word, through prayer, and through joining together joyfully to celebrate the sacraments of communion and baptism.

Service

Holy Shepherd loves and cares for one another and our neighbors. We reach in and reach out to lift one another up. We desire to walk alongside all who have needs.

Welcoming

Holy Shepherd is an inclusive community that values the growing of genuine and authentic relationships.

Faith

Holy Shepherd is a community centered around the worship of our Lord and Savior as a response to what God has done and continues to do. We emphasize art, beauty, creativity, music, and singing in our worship.

Generosity

Holy Shepherd gives of our time, talents, and finances generously because we recognize that the sharing of gifts God gives us enables all of us to thrive.

Legacy

Holy Shepherd is a multi-generational congregation which values our rich history, lives authentically in the present, and is excited to walk into the future *together*.

The rediscovery and solidification of our values has led the Transition Team to reaffirm the Mission and Vision statements of Holy Shepherd:

Mission Statement

“Worshipping and Growing Together in Christ, Serving and Reaching Out Joyfully to All.”

Vision Statement

“We are called to be in relationship with God, with God’s people, and with God’s world every day.”

Relationship with God

Holy Shepherd lives out its mission through our relationship with God first and foremost. We worship our Lord and Savior in weekly corporate worship, we have prayer groups and ministries to deepen our conversations with God, we have Bible study groups that deepen our understanding of who God is, and we enjoy sharing with one another where God is working in our lives.

Relationship with God’s People

Holy Shepherd lives out its mission through nurturing and growing relationships with God’s people. We are a multi-generational community that values insight and wisdom across all ages and experiences, we are inclusive and genuine in our care for one another, and we gather in various ministry groups to grow closer to God and one another.

Relationship with God’s World

Holy Shepherd lives out its mission through establishing and growing relationships in our communities both locally and globally. Locally, we give generously of our time, talents, and finances to The Action Center of Jefferson County, Eiber Elementary School, Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, Sky Ranch and Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camps, Urban Servant Core, Second Wind, Clements Center, Villa Manor Care Center, Warm Heart/Warm Babies, Quilts and Prayer Shawls, and St. Francis Center, just to name a few. Globally, we give generously of our time, talents, and finances through Lutheran World Relief, foreign missions, and more.

4. Where We're Going

"Because of God's gift of our past, Holy Shepherd is committed to living in God's promises into the future."

Holy Shepherd can build on its strengths, which include its central value on worship, its dedication to service, the location of its sanctuary and the care taken for the property, its financial stability, and the personal care of members in small groups and through pastoral care.

With a mature congregation and a changing context, Holy Shepherd has the opportunity to situate itself for the days ahead, stewarding its great resources and gifts to continue to be a center for God's abundant life and love in Christ in the future.

Word and Sacrament

Holy Shepherd is a community grounded in prayer, with Christ our Savior as head. We have an appetite to always grow deeper in our relationship with our Lord through learning and the reading of the Word. Therefore, we continue to emphasize growing in relationship with God and one another through learning and understanding the Word, through prayer, and through joining together joyfully to celebrate the sacraments of communion and baptism.

Service

Holy Shepherd loves and cares for one another and our neighbors. Therefore, we will continue to listen to the needs of those among and around us, and to be active in serving shoulder-to-shoulder cooperatively.

Welcoming

Holy Shepherd is an inclusive community that values the growing of genuine and authentic relationships. Therefore, our individual backgrounds and experiences are considered valid and valued as members of the Body of Christ. Our intent is to declare and demonstrate that Christ's love knows no boundaries.

Faith

Holy Shepherd is a community centered around the worship of our Lord and Savior as a response to what God has done and continues to do. We emphasize art, beauty, creativity, music, and singing in our worship. Therefore, we continue to respond with authentic worship and praise in such a way that the Holy Spirit calls and compels us to do.

Generosity

Holy Shepherd gives of our time, talents, and finances generously because we recognize that the sharing of gifts God gives us enables all of us to thrive. Therefore, we will continue to find new ways to nurture and unleash the gifts of the people and to distribute the gifts and grace that God has showered upon us.

Legacy

Holy Shepherd is a resilient, multi-generational congregation which values our rich history, lives authentically in the present, and is excited to walk into the future *together*. Therefore, we will continue to value one another as an equal partner and voice in being church together recognizing that it is none of us that is the head of the church but Christ.

So, how will Holy Shepherd move towards its future with hope?

1) Specific courses of action to recommend

- Provide opportunities for good/ hard conversations
 - Guided dialogue on current topics that will stretch and grow us
 - Provide additional group opportunities
 - Try organizing by specific demographics (middle age etc.)
 - Consider the Reconciling in Christ program
- Reconnect existing groups with the greater church mission
 - Support existing leadership and build on strengths
 - Continue to have council meetings that re-energize and create
 - Utilize strategic planning with short-term and long-term specific, well-managed means and goals
 - Consider a coach or startup consultant with rostered leaders

2) Staffing recommendations based on our values:

To replace the current model of one Ministry Partner, one full-time Pastor and one part-time Pastor, we recommend one Pastor and one Deacon; that is, one Minister of Word & Sacrament and one Minister of Word & Service. Given the lesser availability of the second, this ministry professional could also be a pastor or un-rostered lay professional with related gifts. An office manager has already been hired to cover additional publications, bookkeeping and supervisory duties. (The call committee will continue discernment and the church council has final authority on Ministry Calls and church staffing.)

Sources

- Listening sessions conducted by Pastor Julie Brooks in February and March, 2022
- Survey of congregational members conducted in May, 2022
- Holy Shepherd archives
- “Shepherd Lead Us,” a booklet in celebration of Holy Shepherd’s Fiftieth Anniversary, June 2005.
- City of Lakewood Statistics and 2020 U.S. Census report
- ELCA Congregational Trend Report, 2021
- Transition Team Report, January 2019