

Improving Need-Oriented Evangelism at Central Lutheran Church

September 4, 2009

Introduction

Need-Oriented Evangelism invites us to “share God’s love for all people” in ways that respond to the real needs and deep longings of our neighbors and friends. “Sharing God’s love” is core to our congregational mission, yet it does not always come easily to many of us at Central. We believe we can and should improve in this area.

This document is an “Action Plan” that details steps to help our congregation address Need-Oriented Evangelism. The Action Plan was drafted by the Long-Range Planning Team (Shannon Anderson, Verlon Brown, Bill Donkervoet, Barbara Palecek, Andrew Rapp, and Adam Rauch) with invaluable input and feedback from Pastor Red Burchfield, Central Council, and many other members of the congregation.

Background

The Long-Range Planning Team was formed by Council in May, 2008 with the charter to:

- Help the congregation clarify and internalize the Central mission statement
- Develop a strategic plan for the congregation and help implement it, using Natural Church Development (NCD) as a tool

The team started work in June, 2008, focusing first on learning Natural Church Development (NCD), the process we are using to evaluate the congregation and develop a strategic plan. The NCD process entails six steps, four of which have been completed.

1. Build Spiritual Momentum

We revisited our mission statement and led the congregation in fruitful discussions about how we are living it out and where we could improve. We gathered feedback about a variety of possible revisions to the mission statement, and, at the Jan, 2009 annual meeting, we unveiled a new mission statement:

Following Christ; sharing God’s love for all people

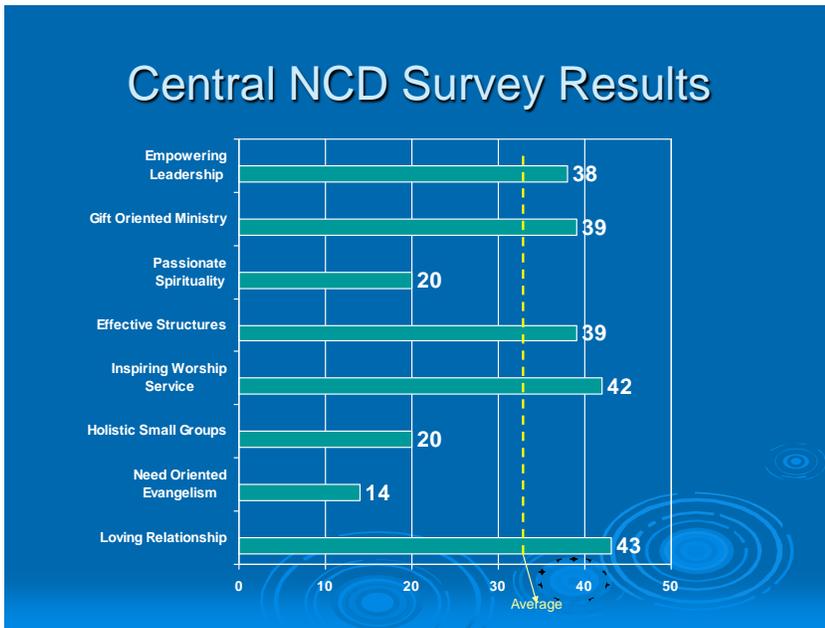
2. Assess

In fall, 2008, 30 members representing a broad cross section of the congregation took a survey measuring the health of our congregation. This survey provided detailed feedback about how our congregation is doing on eight quality characteristics associated with healthy, growing churches.

3. Analyze Results

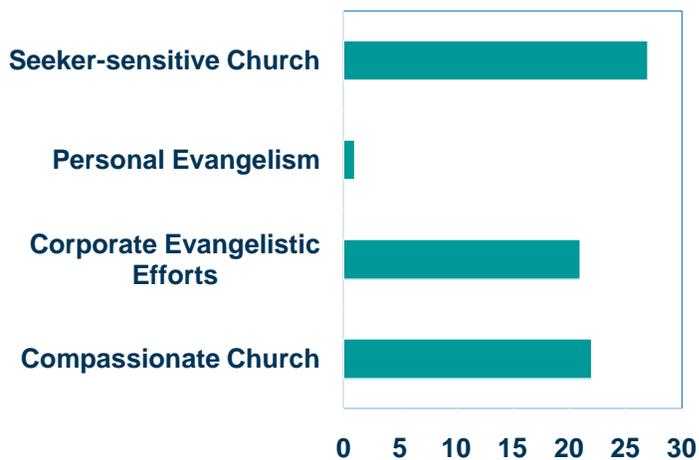
The committee worked with our coach, Pastor Red Burchfield, to analyze the results of the survey and then led feedback sessions at adult forums and with committees and Council. Over the months of December and January we led eight feedback sessions with different congregational groups.

Central NCD Survey Results



As the above summary shows, our church scored relatively low on three of the eight quality characteristics: Need-Oriented Evangelism, Passionate Spirituality, and Holistic Small Groups. At the encouragement of Red and the NCD materials, we decided to focus attention on our lowest quality characteristic, Need-Oriented Evangelism. The survey results provide a further breakdown of this characteristic into four sub-areas:

Need-Oriented Evangelism



As you can see, this quality characteristic spans a wide range of activities. These results and the feedback gathered in various congregational discussions were used to draft an action plan for addressing this area of weakness.

The Long-Range Planning Team held multiple Adult Forums discussing the “eight characteristics” and “six principles” mentioned above that are part of the NCD process. But they can be difficult to remember! At any time, please email the Long-Range Planning team at coregroup@loveiscentral.org or contact any of the members for more information about the characteristics, principles, or other NCD concepts.

4. Develop Action Plan

Based on the four sub-areas shown above, the team drafted five major goals to help improve Need Oriented Evangelism at Central. We then held a day-long retreat with Council to review the proposed goals, brainstorm ideas to accomplish the goals, prioritize various tasks, and start drafting a plan. The team turned these great ideas into a concrete plan with specific tasks that everyone in the congregation will help implement over the next year. This document represents the plan developed by the team and Council with much input from the congregation.

5. Implement and Monitor Plan

The next step is to implement the plan. This is the exciting part where we stop talking and start doing. Implementation has already begun and we expect to involve the entire congregation in this part of the process. As you can see, there are a large number of tasks we want to accomplish; some of them require a small effort by a single person and some require a group of members working together. Our hope is that everyone will find some way to participate.

6. Evaluate and Repeat the Process

After implementing the plan we will retake the survey to measure congregational health again, identify other areas for improvement, and repeat the process.

Through this process we continue to be guided by Central's mission, *Following Christ; sharing God's love for all people*. At any time, please email the long-range planning team at coregroup@loveiscentral.org or contact any of the members to share your thoughts or ask questions about this process.

Goal #1: Get More Involved with the Community Lunch

The Community Lunch on Capitol Hill (CLCH) program is one of the major ways that Central reaches out to and makes a difference in the local community. Despite its positive impact, it has become obvious that many Central members do not feel a strong connection to the program and some aren't even aware of our involvement. Through CLCH, Central provides a means of helping others and sharing God's gifts with those less fortunate. Additionally, CLCH provides a location where Central members can work side by side with other members of the local community, fostering relationships beyond Central's walls. Central would like to strengthen the connection that currently exists between it and CLCH so that Central members feel a greater sense of ownership for the program.

Task 1: Encourage existing Central groups to volunteer at the Community Lunch

The Men's Group, Young Adult Group, Parenting Group, Youth Group, and other Central groups could volunteer once or twice a year to help cook and serve at CLCH, perhaps during Central's traditional month of December. In September, the Long-Range Planning Team will speak to leaders of existing groups about the possibility of volunteering as a group during the year. Individual groups will be able to opt in or out and those who opt in will work with Don to arrange a date. At the end of the year, we will evaluate this effort by seeing how many groups were actually able to volunteer and what their experience was like.

NCD principle at work: Energy Transformation. Existing groups that enjoy spending time together and already have momentum will be invited to participate in an activity that will strengthen them as a group and strengthen the whole church's outreach.

Task 2: Hold drives for items that Community Lunch Guests need on a regular basis.

The social ministry team will work with the lunch director to determine what kinds of items might usefully be collected. Examples might be: toiletries, hats, or socks. The Social Ministry team will then plan and publicize at least one drive to collect these items during the year. The drive could be ongoing or during a specific time. As the drive is publicized and carried out, Central members will be reminded of our connection to the lunch and offered a way to participate meaningfully even if their schedules do not allow them to be present at times when lunch is served. The social ministry team will evaluate the effectiveness of this effort both by seeing what is collected and by seeing how many people participate.

NCD principle at work: Fruitfulness. As we work on this goal, the results will be easy to see in terms of items collected.

Task 3: Regular updates from the Director to the congregation

Don will address the congregation several times a year (three or four) to let us know what is needed from us and how things are going. Additionally, we will print out lunch statistics and homelessness statistics in general and put them in the bulletin and/or Tidings regularly (e.g., monthly). Pastor Shannon will contact Don and schedule his updates which may be done at forums or through Temple Talks. His first address to the congregation will be before Christmas in conjunction with the December lunches hosted by Central volunteers. Council will evaluate this effort at the end of one year.

NCD principle at work:

- Energy Transformation. There is a lot that is happening at the lunch that is positive and exciting and having more regular communication channels will allow the congregation to see that.
- Interdependence. As Don spends more time with Central members and vice/versa, the two communities will be able to gain from one another's strengths.

Task 4: Encourage Youth Group involvement in the Community Lunch

Directing the energy and enthusiasm of the Youth Group toward the Community Lunch would be a good service opportunity for them and another visible reminder to the congregation. The youth are at a great age to provide real help during the lunch (as mentioned in Task 1), but they should be enlisted for additional tasks as well. Possible ideas include:

- Holding a bake sale once or twice a year at coffee hour to raise money for CLCH and raise awareness of the program and Central's involvement in it.
- Helping out "behind the scenes" at the Community Lunch, e.g., organizing food in storage areas, helping with food runs in the Community Lunch van, and/or generating awareness in the congregation by producing articles and other materials for the congregation.

The Social Ministry Team will initiate the conversations, but the youth themselves should brainstorm ideas and choose the specific form of their involvement.

NCD principle at work: Energy Transformation. This will direct the excitement of the youth group both toward the needs of the Community Lunch and toward congregational awareness.

Task 5: Continue and grow the Knitting Group

In September, the knitting group will begin a new focus as a service group. During their monthly meetings, knitters will be knitting hats for community lunch guests. Children and non-knitters will be invited to join and the coordinator, Jen Evans, will provide knitting instruction. After Christmas, the knitting group will re-evaluate how many people are coming and how they feel about this as a service project and decide if they want to continue or work on something else together.

NCD principles at work:

- Energy Transformation. We will take a group that people are already excited about and expand its mission beyond creating community to helping us strengthen our connection to the lunch.
- Symbiosis. As the group attracts new members who are interested in the project or in learning to knit, more members will have the opportunity to participate in a small group where faith and community are nurtured.

Goal #2: Build Compassionate Outreach Opportunities beyond Community Lunch

Although the Community Lunch program is a great way to reach out to the community, we wish to identify additional opportunities to reach out to share God's love for all people. By reaching out to the community, we can cultivate personal and corporate relationships with our neighbors, both Christian and not.

Task 1: Establish a Social Ministry Team

Brian Anderson will lead this new team and Bill Donkervoet will serve as the representative from LRP. Their first objective will be to recruit additional folks with interest in social outreach. They will do this during the fall. In addition to working on the tasks below, they will focus on tasks listed in Goal #5.

Task 2: Do a Needs Assessment of the Community

The social ministry team will do a needs assessment in the community. To perform this, they will make use of demographic information from the synod and other sources. In addition, they will contact local neighborhood groups to discuss their needs and concerns and to determine if there are unaddressed community needs. They will begin this task in the fall and complete it by February.

Task 3: Determine where Central will focus outreach efforts based on the above research

After the team has done its research, they will share their findings with the congregation and based on their interest and congregational interest, one or more areas for outreach will be further explored. The team will have the opportunity to determine if our efforts are best focused in one primary area or if there is a combination of smaller opportunities that we should take advantage of.

NCD principles at work:

- **Multiplication:** Finding programs to regenerate themselves until the need no longer exists; e.g., Community Lunch still going after twenty-five plus years, Central's open and affirming action decision.
- **Energy Transformation:** As we respond to actual needs in the community, we will take advantage of energy that already exists instead of trying to "drum up interest" in programs that people don't want or need.
- **Sustainability:** having a team to focus on this area will help us to address outreach in an ongoing way instead of with a one-time effort.
- **Fruitfulness:** The Social Ministry Committee will observe the success of their efforts as they determine their ongoing efforts.

By addressing this opportunity for outreach, it is hoped that Central can be an additional resource for the community as well as an example of its mission statement, "Following Christ; sharing God's love for all people."

Goal #3: Practice Listening & Sharing Our Faith Stories More Regularly

Need-oriented evangelism invites us to share “God’s love for all people” in ways that are not pushy or manipulative, but that respond to the real needs and deep longings of our neighbors and friends. However, as a congregation and as individuals, we are reluctant to talk about how faith acts in our own lives let alone invite others into a similar journey. At the same time, we as a congregation have discovered in the last couple of years the power of faith stories told from the heart when they have been part of stewardship programs. As a congregation, we would like to help one another grow in our ability to share our faith stories so that we can encourage one another and also so that we can invite others to experience the richness of the gospel.

Task 1: Monthly Temple Talks during worship about “Why Central/my faith is important to me.”

What we hope to accomplish: Church leaders will become more comfortable sharing their faith; members will be inspired and encouraged; worship will be energized.

Responsible party: Members of the Council and the Long-Range Planning Team will each take a month (this is 14 people, but this will allow those who are truly uncomfortable with public speaking to decline). Pastor Shannon and Tom Donlea will take the lead in recruiting folks and making a schedule

Timeline: September – August, 2009. Re-evaluate effectiveness in late spring 2010; decide on continuation or restructuring for fall.

How we will measure: Feedback sessions with both Council and long range planning in the spring to discuss the experience

NCD principles at work:

- Energy Transformation: People already have had very positive experiences with Temple Talks, this will allow us to use that energy to work on one of our weak areas
- Interdependence: Sharing our faith stories will strengthen our worship experience as well as deepen our spirituality

Task 2: Sharing and discussing “deep questions” at the beginning of every committee meeting

What we hope to accomplish: Sharing faith is like working a muscle, it takes practice. Having committees spend time sharing at each meeting will allow a good percentage of the congregation to practice this unused muscle. In addition, sharing faith stories will increase relational bonds between committee members and make committee work more satisfying.

Responsible party: The Council and the Long-Range Planning Team will invite committee leaders to be a part of this process. Pastor Shannon will provide materials for committee leaders (Faith Talk Questions or other materials). Committee leaders will be responsible for making sure this becomes part of their regular meetings.

Timeline: Begins in September, 2009. Pastor Shannon will provide resources for all committee leaders prior to September and the opportunity for feedback during the year. In late spring, the Council will evaluate with committee leaders

How we will measure: The Long-Range Planning Team will get feedback from committee leaders in the spring about how the faith sharing has affected their work as a committee. Committee leaders will invite committee members to reflect on how the faith sharing has affected their experience of being on a committee.

NCD principles at work:

- **Interdependence:** As committee members spend time sharing and getting to know one another, this will improve the effectiveness of the committee (effective structures) by increasing members' commitment to its work and improve the overall experience of committee work (holistic small groups).
- **Symbiosis:** Already existing committees will cooperate with the work of strengthening need-oriented evangelism.
- **Sustainability:** This model is easily expandable as more committees or teams are formed or as more people become involved in the work of the church, this model allows for increasing number of members to participate in faith sharing.

Task 3: Sunday school students share their experiences of faith and God with the congregation

What we hope to accomplish: Our Sunday School students are already having important discussions and learnings. Many teachers are inspired by their work with the kids. We would like the whole congregation to benefit from the wisdom and faith of our children. Our children will also benefit in that they will participate meaningfully in the growth of the congregation and be faith examples to others.

Responsible party: Pastor Shannon and the KidsAreCentral committee will develop resources for Sunday School Teachers to use so that there are rotating bulletin board displays of artwork or quotes from different classes and regular features in the Tidings (most likely quarterly). Sunday School teachers will lead classes in materials provided by the KAC committee and Pastor Shannon.

Timeline: Begins in September. Will be a one-year program through the end of Sunday School in May.

How will we measure: KidsAreCentral will get feedback in the spring from Sunday School teachers (inviting them also to get feedback from their students).

NCD principles at work:

- **Interdependence:** Our children's ministry is strong at Central and this will both strengthen it and allow it to strengthen our evangelism effort.
- **Symbiosis:** We will use the existing structure of KAC and Sunday School as we work on this goal.
- **Energy Transformation:** Our kids are already a source of energy and excitement in the church, we will use the momentum we already have to work on one of our weaker areas.

Goal #4: Create Better Structure for Identifying Needs and Empowering Evangelism

As a congregation, we need to strengthen our effectiveness in “sharing God’s love for all people.” Currently, we have no structure or process in place for examining how we are doing this or encouraging people in doing it better. We have a worship committee to look after our worship life, a KidsAreCentral committee to make sure our Sunday School is strong, but no structure or process in place to make sure we are proclaiming the gospel beyond our walls.

Task 1: Establish an Evangelism Team

This winter (2010), we will create a team dedicated to thinking about how we are sharing God’s love for all people. This team will be responsible for creating opportunities for us as a congregation for practicing need-oriented evangelism. By creating this team, we hope to use some of the gifts of our congregation members to strengthen an area where we are weak. The Long-Range Planning Team will be responsible for recruiting this group.

The Evangelism Team will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the tasks below. Additional activities could include:

- 1) Providing opportunities for members to share their faith experiences with each other
- 2) Incorporating evangelism training during Adult Forums, Sunday School, Retreats, other events
- 3) Using materials provided by “Natural Church Development,” connected websites, pastoral guidance from Pastors Shannon and Verlon.
- 4) Sharing Central’s history and role in the community at events in the park, marching in Pride Parade with a banner, handouts, events in the Parish Hall that would be of interest to others in the community and issue invitations with posters or banners to be seen from the street
- 5) Identifying what it is to be Lutheran
- 6) Listening for where our message is needed, both at church and in the community.

NCD principles at work: The primary principle at work here is Sustainability; instead of having a one-time effort in evangelism, we will create a structure where our current efforts can find a home and which can generate new efforts in the future.

Task 2: Create an evangelism budget

The budget serves two purposes: It allows us to designate financial resources toward working in this area and it increases the awareness in the congregation that this is a priority. The Evangelism Team will work on a budget request in the fall of 2010 for the 2011 year. The budget could come from gift funds or from a specific request as part of the Fall Pledge Drive. Budgeted items could be for faith sharing training, advertising or other areas as the team deems appropriate.

NCD principles at work: Energy Transformation is a key principle here. Every year we do a stewardship drive in the fall and many people give deeply from their financial resources to support the work of this church. However, none of this energy currently goes into evangelism. As we make evangelism part of our budgeting cycle, we use the financial resources that are already present in the community.

Task 3: Provide evangelism and faith sharing training

We need to equip our members with the tools to share their faith in settings outside of the church. In addition to the work we are doing under the goal of “practice listening and sharing our faith stories.” The Evangelism Team with Pastor Shannon will provide training at adult forums in the language of faith and ways we can talk about our faith as progressive Christians. This can be built into the forum schedule for the spring or fall of 2010.

NCD principles at work:

- **Multiplication:** The Evangelism Team will not be the only evangelists in the congregation, but will in this process equip other members for the work of faith sharing and in addition will identify new people with gifts in the area of evangelism.
- **Interdependence:** We will use the already existing adult forum structure to work on this goal. In addition, as we work on faith sharing, we will also strengthen our own faith (Passionate Spirituality).

Task 4: Use Facebook to connect with members and allow members to invite new people to connect

The Evangelism Team will be responsible (with Pastor Shannon) for maintaining a Facebook presence where members can connect with one another and easily share with their friends about church events. The Facebook page has been created; the web team will link it to our home page.

NCD principles at work: Energy Transformation is at work here. Many of our members already use Facebook; in addition, it is a way that they already connect with non-members. Facebook is a growing phenomenon in our culture. Having a Facebook presence will allow us to use a system that is already set up to help people connect to specifically help them connect to the church and the gospel.

Responsibility and Evaluation

The Evangelism Team would be responsible for overseeing meeting these tasks and reporting to the Long-Range Planning Committee as well as the Council. After six months, we'll evaluate progress that has occurred as well as deficits in progress. Discuss methods to correct or move ahead in the next steps. The committee will always welcome ideas from congregation members for advancing its goals.

Goal #5: Establish Stronger Voice & Identity in the Larger Community

Need-Oriented Evangelism encourages the Central congregation to act on its mission of “sharing God’s love for all people” by reaching out to the community around us. Central members have a long history of effective advocacy that seeks to communicate God’s grace and the gospel to the larger community.

Although our society is increasingly secular and skeptical of religious institutions, people also yearn for a deeper spiritual foundation for guidance and peace. Central is a unique church to help fulfill this spiritual need because Central has a diverse congregation that is rooted in a Lutheran tradition and genuinely open and affirming to people from any background.

Central and its members have much to share with the larger community. The goals below help us engage and encourage others to participate in Central’s dynamic spiritual community.

Task 1: Design, procure, and distribute T-shirts with new logo

What we hope to accomplish: Communicate about Central in a creative, simple, and non-threatening way. (“Love is Central” and/or website on back of shirt?)

Responsible party: John Mostrom and Darla DeFrance.

Timeline: T-shirts available by December.

How we will measure: Per feedback from John and Darla, see how popular the T-shirts are within the first 3-4 months.

NCD principles at work:

- **Interdependence:** Communicating about Central to the public strengthens existing relationships among members and perhaps will encourage questions and discussion with non-members.
- **Sustainability:** Once the T-shirt is made, Central’s message is easily repeated as additional members wear the shirt.
- **Multiplication:** More opportunities for the public to become aware of Central.

Task 2: Advocacy on a variety of social justice issues

What we hope to accomplish: Strengthen the Seattle community’s awareness of Central as an advocate for social justice causes from a religious perspective. Some efforts could reach beyond Seattle. Initial efforts:

- Become an advocating congregation through the process set up by the Lutheran Public Policy Office (LPPO).
- Create a system for prioritizing advocacy focus.

Longer term, we would like to establish more public ways of getting our message out there. Vehicles might include articles/editorials in a local newspaper, visible participation in and sponsorship of local events that advocate for social justice causes, etc.

Responsible party: Social Ministry Committee.

Timeline: First effort completed in November. Second in January.

How we will measure: Long-Range Planning Team will get feedback from the Social Ministry Committee.

NCD principles at work:

- Symbiosis: Structures already exist for advocacy and communication to the public, so matter of Central strategically tapping into them for need orientation evangelism

Task 3: Central-sponsored community events

What we hope to accomplish: Strengthen the Seattle community's awareness of Central as a unique and diverse Lutheran congregation that is open and affirming to people from any background. We will plan to schedule two community events over the course of the year. Events could be existing Central traditions widened to include the community or new events that are geared specifically towards the community. Ideas include:

- Parenting group (led by Stephanie)
- Picnic in park (perhaps have live music, advertise with Capitol Hill groups, merchants, etc.)
- Movie night (with spiritual or social justice theme, potluck?)
- Harvest Fair (advertise to Capitol Hill community; invite a few local artists to sell goods, etc.)
- Speaker or author signing event

Responsible party: Social Ministry Committee and Evangelism Team.

Timeline: First event in the winter; Second in spring

How we will measure: Long-Range Planning Team will get feedback from (1) Social Ministry Committee or person(s) organizing events; and (2) surveys taken and collected at the events.

NCD principles at work:

- Multi-usage: Use existing church resources (fellowship hall, etc) to create additional opportunities for larger community to experience Central.
- Symbiosis: Most events already exist, so matter of tweaking them with larger community in mind.