



St. Luke Lutheran Church
Surrey, British Columbia



Connecting People to Jesus

*Preparation for a Retreat Workshop on
Small Group Ministry at St. Luke Lutheran Church*

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Executive summary

The title of the document is, “*Connecting People to Jesus*”. This title will also become St. Luke’s new motto, replacing the current “*No One Stands Alone*”. It reflects St. Luke’s vision going forward and gives overarching direction to our current purpose for the church.

VISION / MISSION

St. Luke Lutheran Church exists to connect people to Jesus Christ.

PURPOSE

By the power of the Holy Spirit, St. Luke will accomplish its vision and mission by:

- Bringing people to Jesus and membership in his family
- Leading and nurturing them to Christ-like maturity
- Equipping them for their ministry in the Church and their life mission in the world

The purpose of this paper is to provide existing and potential leaders of small group ministries with background information related to our vision for St. Luke in the coming years. Armed with this information, we hope to gather leaders at a congregational retreat / workshop to discuss ways and means of creating and maintaining healthy participation in the Church in honor our Lord. Although the goals apply to all facets of the Church, the main focus of attention at the workshop will on the small group ministry.

The first section of this paper provides information on what the Church is, what it is not, its traits and its mission and objectives.

Five functions related to creating and maintaining an active Church are discussed: adoration, education, testimony (evangelism), social work (social action) and fellowship (communion).

The second section provides a short discussion on the vision for St. Luke. To fulfill this vision however requires a church in action, meaning the church requires its members to be active.

The third section of the paper provides details and an agenda for the proposed congregational retreat.

Vision Mission Planning (VMP) is expecting this to be a small but important event in the history of our Church. We want you to be there and be a part of forming the foundation for seeing the Church’s vision through. Once a date has been set, please mark the event on your calendar and make an effort to join the leaders at St. Luke – you are needed for us to be a Church in action!

Theological Basis for Functions of the Church

The Church

The Christian Church always has been asked about the nature of its identity. When the Church loses clarity about its identity, it loses reason for its existence.

During its development, the Church was understood to be a physical and administrative structure rather than the congregation of all believers.

Martin Luther and other reformers argued that seeing the church primarily as a structure was to adulterate the biblical statement about the meaning of the Christian church.

During the time of Friedrich Schleiermacher in the era of rationalism (19th century), the church started to be considered a free association of those sharing the same faith and who decided to organize a church. So, the church started to be considered a human organization – the Church was explained by the sociological point of view rather than a theological one.

What is the Church?

In the New Testament, the term church is used to specify the universal church that includes all Christians¹. It also is used for

¹ (Matt 16:18; 1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 1:22; 3:21).

the local church, gathered in a specific place²; the national church or a church of some defined area³; and the churches that had their meetings at private homes⁴.

Although the term “Church” is used in different situations, the understanding is that the church is God’s work, rather than human work. It can be better understood when we take a look at the Greek word, *ekklesia*, which was used to represent Church and means, “call to out”. The church is the group of people who were called out of the unbelieving and out of those separated from God, to become those who listen to God’s voice.

Luther says in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostolic Creed:

- So, the church is God’s work. When we talk about church, we talk about the works of the Holy Spirit in and through men. Rather than establishing its own purposes, the church has to accept the purposes that God has established first⁵.

It is important to highlight that while the church is God’s working, the New Testament

² (Acts 5:11; 2:47)

³ (Acts 9:31)

⁴ (1 Corinthians 16:18; Romans 16:5)

⁵ The following readings present the same truth: the Church is God’s work. Ephesians 2.19-22, 5.25-27; 1 Peter 1.3-5 and Revelations 19.7.

presents the church like a local manifestation – a local congregation or a group of local congregations. The Church in the New Testament is a concrete concept that appears in a visible form. We can recognize the church by the administration and use of the Word of God and the Sacraments. The church is not an invisible and abstract reality, but something visible and concrete.

Marks of the Church

The Christian Church, which is the work of the Holy Spirit and appears through local congregations, is recognized through some specific “marks”.

Martin Luther in his writings⁶ states that the church can be recognized by the following special characteristics:

- The Holy Word of God
- The Holy Sacrament of Baptism
- Holy Sacrament of the Altar
- Absolution (Keys)
- Ordination and Call of servants of the church
- Prayer, worship and thanksgiving
- The Holy Cross.

Means of Grace are the ways that God the Holy Spirit creates faith in the hearts of Christians, forgives their sins, gives them eternal salvation and

causes them to grow spiritually. The efficacy of these means does not depend on the faith, strength, status, or good works of those who proclaim the Word of God or administer God's sacraments; rather, the efficacy of these means rests in God alone, who has promised to work through God's gift of these means to God's church.

It's possible to affirm that Luther is enlarging the meaning of the Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments). Articles VII and VIII of the Augsburg Confession declares that the Church is the congregation of the saints, where the Gospel is preached in a pure way and where the Sacraments are administered correctly.

Organization of the Church

It's important to be clear about the meaning of the church and its marks. The Church is the people who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, which means all of those who trust in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This Church is recognized by the preaching of the Gospel and by the administration of the Means of Grace. God has instituted the Saint Ministry or Ministry of Preaching with the purpose of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.

But the New Testament does not speak of a divine rule or order about how the church should be organized. The organization should serve the

⁶ *Von den Konzilien und der Kirche, 1539 (About Councils and the Church),*

Church to announce the Gospel in the best way possible. The organization keeps in mind the objectives for which the Church exists.

Church and the Means of Grace

The intention of God for humanity is grace, love and salvation⁷. This intention is clear, expressed and established in Jesus Christ.

The work of Jesus Christ in favor of all humanity is communicated through the Gospel. The Gospel is, obviously, the news about what God did to save mankind through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the great means by which God gives His Grace, creating in men the true faith and giving them forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Each activity of the church should be revealing this God's will for mankind, based on the Gospel. Each activity of the church should be based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church searches for power and feeds on the Means of Grace. Everything that the church does and performs, it does and performs because of these Means of Grace.

The work of the Church should be developed based on the Word of God and the Sacraments. Without the Word of God and the Sacraments, in

other words, without the Means of Grace, there is just activity, and in the longer term, the ruin of the church, because She loses Her creative, maintaining sources of power.

Ministry

The purpose of God is to save humanity through Christ. And the way that God acts is through the Means of Grace. In the conjunction of these two aspects appears the doctrine of the Holy Ministry.

God instituted the Holy Ministry with the purpose that the Gospel would be preached and people would be gathered to the Faith through the action of the Holy Spirit. The biblical foundation for the Ecclesiastical ministry is in the fact that God wants the Gospel to be shared.

The Ecclesiastical Ministry is not an office with an end in itself, but an office linked with the Word of God, instituted with the purpose that people be gathered to the faith, and by faith, to eternal salvation.

Because the whole work of the church is founded on the Word of God and Sacraments, this work converges in this one Ministry, the Ecclesiastical Ministry or The Preaching Office. Other ministries at church are not separate from the Ecclesiastical Ministry. The office itself should be distinguished from the person, the minister of God. Someone is a minister when effectively occupying the Ecclesiastical

⁷ (John 3.16; Galatians 3.4-7)

Ministry. No one minister of the Word of God has any power more or less than what the Word of God gives⁸.

The Priesthood of All Believers and the Ecclesiastical Ministry

Every Christian is a priest. The priest in the Old Testament was the person who taught the people the Word of God and he took the people's problems to God, by prayers and sacrifices. The priest had an intermediate function between God and people.

Since every Christian is a priest, everyone has the privilege to proclaim the Word of God, to make requests of God on his own, and to present his own sacrifices of praise and worship to God. There is no need for a mediator, or a special cast of priests.

In truth, God declares each Christian a priest and institutes the Ecclesiastical Ministry in the church. The Ecclesiastical ministry is only instituted where there are priests. There are no ministers of the church (pastors) "unplugged" from the people of God. The Ecclesiastical Ministry was created to guarantee the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. In this way God intends to assure that all the priests will be equipped through the Ecclesiastical ministry to exercise their functions in the

world. Every Christian has the privilege and the responsibility to live like a priest. And when God gathers people at the church, these people should establish, support and respect the Ecclesiastical Ministry because God, through this Ministry, wants to support them, strength them and assure them the administration of the Sacraments and the Word of God.

The Church and its Objectives

The church doesn't exist to be passive. In fact it is God who calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the church, which doesn't mean that the church doesn't do anything. It means the church is in this world not for running its own business but to do the work of God and to serve as an instrument in God's hands for the salvation of the world.

The church has a mission conferred by God, which might be executed. This church learns this mission in the Word of God. We can express this mission as the responsibility to take 100% of the Gospel to 100% of the people. There can not be any concessions about that. The Church doesn't have the right to minimize the Word of God, neglecting to announce all the designs of God. The task of the Church always will be incomplete while there would be those who don't know or don't believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Any accommodation in one of these

⁸ Book of Concord: CA XXVIII

aspects brings damage to the Church.

When the Church is reflecting about its objectives, it is important to have in mind the mission that God has given it. This mission is the same mission that God gave to His own Son Jesus Christ. According to Luke 2.48-49, the Savior affirms that He has come to the world to run the business of His Father. This business of His Father was the salvation of humankind⁹.

Because God gives this salvation to the men through the Gospel, it's understood that this mission of the church is to disseminate the Gospel with the purpose that "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"¹⁰. The Christian Church is in charge of running the business of the Father in the world, which means, to make known the salvation that Christ won for all at the cross.

God keeps this purpose and this is clearly understood from the fact that He keeps the world and doesn't immediately punish men because of their sins¹¹. God wants men to have the opportunity to trust in the grace that He manifests in Jesus. In this way, God institutes, governs, gives authority, and maintains creation with the purpose that the church has the minimal conditions to preach the Gospel.

⁹ Luke 19.10

¹⁰ Phillipians 2.11

¹¹ 2 Peter 3.1-13

The target of the mission of the church is people. And because of that, the Church needs to look for people and confront them with the Gospel where they are. In the effort to take the gospel to other people, the Church becomes involved in activities like Social works, Education and others activities, because human beings have different needs and the church shows the love of God for people¹². However, all of these activities aren't the objective or target. The church becomes involved in them because it wants to announce the love of God in Christ.

When the church is acting, there is no space for accommodating those who wish to sit on the sidelines inside the church. The church in action means all of its members in action. When someone inside the church doesn't do what it's supposed to do, then the whole church suffers. It's clear that not everybody will do the same tasks, but everybody will participate, without exception, in accord with the gifts and talents that God gives them.

The main objective of the church can be divided into five functions:

- Adoration
- Education
- Testimony
- Social work
- Fellowship

¹² Matt 25.31-46

These functions aren't isolated from each other and should interact.

Adoration

Adoration is the action of the Church by which the people of God love, honor, respect and praise God. It includes both public and individual adoration. The Gospel is in the centre of the Christian service and it's also present there for the purpose of saving people. Actually, the Service or Adoration involves the whole life of Christians, at the church or at their homes on week days. Sunday service and daily life depend on each other, and both are present in the Adoration of the Church. The Adoration of the Christian Church depends totally on the Word of God and Sacraments¹³.

Adoration is an activity that starts in this world and will be performed in a perfect way in eternity. It is evidence of the presence of the church when Christians are gathered around the Word of God and Sacraments to worship God. They are moved by faith to be gathered to worship God.

Public Worship – Service:

The New Testament uses a word that helps us to understand the meaning of the Christian Service. The word is liturgy, that it comes from Laos (people) and Ergon

¹³ Romans 12.1-2;
Colossians 3.16.17;
Psalm 100;
Matt 18.17;
John 20.23.

(works). The word once meant the service (work) that people were doing for the State, or for the Government. The Christian Church used this term to specify the service that people of God, the Church, were doing for their God.

Liturgy includes the whole life of service of the Christian to his God. Therefore, the liturgy begins with Baptism and continues through the whole Christian life, because the whole life is a Service (worship) to God.

The Public Service has its centre, orientation and strength in the Word of God and the Sacraments. In daily life it's necessary to search orientation, strength and direction in the same Word and Sacraments. This link between Public Service and daily life is indispensable in true adoration. When brothers and sisters are gathered to worship God, they are repeating in the liturgy of the church what they want to live in the daily liturgy in Christian life. On the other hand, when there is separation between the public Service and a Christian's life, or when there is a distance between life and Service, there is a crisis of Christian life.

Bible Study: Disposition to study God's Word is an act of adoration. Bible Studies take an important place during the public service, although it doesn't mean there is no more space for the message. It's an important moment when people can address specific questions about

the message and Bible readings
for that Sunday.

Daily devotion: Beyond the Public Service, other great moment of adoration is the daily devotion. During the public Service the whole congregation is gathered before the altar at church. During daily devotions, Christian congregations worship God creating in each home an altar. The daily devotion can be a very simple moment following a Bible reading and prayer, or can be a well elaborated moment, when people can sing, listen the Word of God and pray. Daily devotions are the natural link between public worship and daily worship.

Relevant liturgy means comprehension of it. It's necessary to have a moment when members can be reminded of liturgy and its biblical basis. New liturgical forms can and should be searched, since the Word of God and Sacraments aren't obscured by new forms.

Education

Education inside the Christian Church is a need. Jesus Christ, before ascending to heaven, not only ordered us to make new disciples, but added that they should be taught about everything Jesus had commanded¹⁴. In the Old Testament the importance of education was recognized. When God delivered the ten commandments to Israel, He advised formally that they should be taught to the people.

¹⁴ Matt 28.18-20.

Therefore, He gave a series of practical suggestions on how this teaching should be done¹⁵. Israel had a good network of schools, the synagogues.

It's easy to understand that the learning of the Word of God is vital to keeping the faith. Although, it seems no one denies the importance of teaching in the church, there is no clarity about the goals of this education, and sometimes the wrong goals or incomplete goals are settled upon.

The great objective of God is to save people by faith in Jesus Christ. The objective of the church cannot be otherwise than to bring and confirm people in this faith and to teach them to live in conformity with it.

The objective of Christian Education will always be that people believe and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Having the objective of creating the true faith, the Christian Education will transform completely the life of people, through the action of the Holy Spirit. In this way, to teach the faith means to train people to live in this faith, and effectively to practice this faith.

A mistake very common in Christian Education is the absence of attention to the training and practice of Christian Life. The Church cannot be satisfied, in this area, just with the transmission of knowledge. It should include the training and practice of faith.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 6.1-9.

Education embraces the whole work of the church.

Programs of Education:

There is no prescription saying how many programs or what kinds a congregation should have. There are those programs that are running constantly like the weekly sermon and Sunday school.

Testimony (Evangelism)

The purpose of the Church is to preach the Gospel. Through evangelism, the Holy Spirit works to create the true faith in Jesus Christ. It is through the testimony of the Church that God planned to take the Gospel to all the people. When the church is unfaithful in this task, she is not just depriving herself of the Means of Grace, but she is also not being salt and light to the world¹⁶.

Evangelism is the principle that guides and gives orientation to each activity in a Christian Congregation.

Let take the Service as an example. The Service should be a testimony of the faith that the Church has in Jesus Christ. The church will sing hymns that express such faith, it will listen to messages that edify or build upon this faith, and it will ensure that the whole Service be an invitation for unbelievers to believe in Jesus Christ.

Normally, human organizations are concerned

about people who are part of them. It's not the same at the church. She exists because those who don't believe in Jesus Christ have an opportunity to be taken to their Savior. It means, the Christian church exists to talk about Jesus Christ to those who are not yet members.

Evangelism is an activity that was born with the church and without which the church dies. Jesus didn't wait the till end of his ministry to send the disciples to evangelize. Instead, on the first day they were called, they started to evangelize¹⁷.

Social Work (Social Action)

Like the Savior, who, coming to the world to save humankind wasn't indifferent to sick people, or the disoriented. But always he extended His love in a full way. In the same way Christians will testify about their faith together with their love works, where necessary.

In the early Church, it was not a question of whether or not they should help those in need. The Church helped those in need, out of love for their neighbors, motivated by God's love.

Of course, the Church will not keep those in need dependent indefinitely, but will provide some help, and especially it will share the Grace of God in Jesus Christ.

A survey could be done to see the social problems around

Evangelism is the moment when a non-believer is confronted with the Good News of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ Matt 5.13-16.

¹⁷ John 1.35-51.

the church and how St. Luke could help those in need. However, right now two important programs are running:

- **Drop-in playschool:** The drop-in playschool gives mothers and their children the opportunity to have a time to play, read and tell stories, and chat with others.
- **Stephen Ministry:** Stephen Ministry offers help to those in need. Trained people take the time to talk and offer a Christian orientation.

Fellowship (Communion)

The Bible recognizes that humans are social beings. Men don't live or subsist alone. God said it would be good for man to have a partner, and so he instituted marriage and family, the necessary environment for life to be nurtured.

The fall into sin corrupted all the social links of mankind. What God created to be good was corrupted by evil. Mankind doesn't find, since the fall, true communion or fellowship. It's in Christ that a human being finds true communion with his neighbor.

Human fellowship depends on fellowship with God, because from God we receive forgiveness, love and hope. Without these elements, human relationships don't survive and thrive.

Fellowship is more than a feeling, and is expressed in a practical way. Holy Communion

is the most significant moment when Jesus Christ is with us through His Body and Blood and Christians are connected to Him and each other, being part of this table, looking for forgiveness, comfort and hope in the same Grace of God.

Sometimes this fellowship is not expressed like it could be during the Services at the church. People don't know each other, don't stay after to visit. Congregations without good fellowship on the horizontal level will express that during the Services. What could be done to change this situation?

It is evident that the way is through the cross of Christ. Sincere repentance and trust in the Grace of God is the key to change it. The forgiveness that God gives us is also linked with his love. His love is also necessary to establish new links of communion, to create a genuine interest in our neighbors.

Fellowship is an area that appears in all the occasions that the church is gathered for all sorts of purposes. In this way, the leadership is always aware of the opportunities to meet people and connect them to this family.

It's possible to split the work of the Church into more than five areas. It has been considered here as five areas for reasons of better planning. It's important to mention that Administration and Stewardship aren't included here, but play an important role in church's work.

Conclusion

The Church is recognized as God's work. God creates the Church, through his Word and Sacraments, through the action of the Holy Spirit. And it's God who acts through the church, when she makes her works. God doesn't tell the church how to organize herself. But God establishes the tasks that need to be executed by the church. The organization needs to serve this purpose.

The organization of the church is a constant challenge for all of those who are involved in the work of God's kingdom. Keeping in mind the objectives established by God , may those who are the servants of the church do their work with the purpose "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."¹⁸

¹⁸ Philippians 2.10-11

A Vision for St. Luke Lutheran Church



Considering the foundations for the Church work presented earlier, and specifically the importance of focusing on Christ's work, I'd like to suggest the following sentence as St. Luke's Vision:

St. Luke Lutheran Church exists to connect people to Jesus Christ!

The bridge shown below is an image representing this connection of people being linked with Christ. This connection starts with Baptism and follows for all of life, having its plenitude in heaven. The church does its best to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ the Savior to the baptized and to non-believers.

This connection is a two-way road: On one hand, the Priests of God approach by themselves to Christ through services, prayers, intercessions, petitions, and thanksgivings. On other hand, Christ leads them through Word and Sacraments.



One way for each of us to serve Christ is through participation and leadership of small groups within the context of the Church. St. Luke would like to focus on Small Group Ministry as a fundamental means of To do so, St. Luke is committed to:

- Supporting all small groups, recognizing that this is its strength
- Encouraging each member to be involved in a small group in accord with their personal talents, interests and vocation

The priests are called to serve God, proclaiming his love and real intention of Salvation for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. This is not a task just for one person, the pastor, but for the whole body of Christ, the whole congregation, the priests gathered under His banner.



Congregational Retreat / Workshop

VMP would like to meet with current and potential active participants, leaders if you will, to discuss the implementation of the ideas presented in this paper.

Small groups include both existing groups formed to meet congregational needs and standing committees on council that provide administration and stewardship for the Church.

Small groups:

- Monday Morning Tots
- ChristCare
- Daybreak
- Family Ministry
- Friday Group
- Mens' Breakfast
- Golden Agers
- LWML-C
- Choir
- Worship Teams
- Sound
- Sunday School
- Tri-L
- Youth

Council committees:

- Communications
- Education
- Elders
 - Ushers
 - Altar Guild
- Evangelism
- Stewardship
 - Financial Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Trustees

Participants at the retreat would discuss the five functions of the Church presented in this paper. Recall the five functions are:

- Adoration
- Education
- Testimony
- Social work
- Fellowship

In addition, we will address whether existing (and proposed) groups follow three small-group ministry principles. These principles, as explained in Appendix A, are:

- Bible Study = Word of God = content
- Communion = fellowship = support
- Mission = task = purpose

The expectation is that the workshop would provide participants with tools and enthusiasm for them to encourage groups they are part of to follow the functions and principles learned at the retreat.

In particular, participants will be asked to discuss what they have learned with members of their groups, and to apply the functions and principles when groups meet again in the fall to discuss their goals and objectives.

I think it would be beneficial to have such a meeting away from the Church structure in order to focus what it means to be a Church.

The agenda for the meeting would have the aim to:

- Remind participants of what it is to be a church
- Review the purpose of current (and proposed) small groups
- Analyze whether current (and proposed) small groups follow the five functions and three principles of the church
- Equip participants with knowledge and tools to make small group ministry stronger and more attractive and effective for our members
- Encourage members of St. Luke to become, if they are not so already, ACTIVE participants of the Church. Ask the questions,

“What group at St. Luke has a purpose that most closely aligns with that of my own?”

“What new group could be formed that would have a purpose aligned with my own?”

Proposed agenda

- **Breakfast and fellowship**
- Devotion and praise
- Expectations for the day
- Discuss “Connecting People to Jesus”
- Purpose of existing small groups
- Breakout: Analyze one (or more) of existing small groups in relation to the five functions and three principles for small group ministry
- **Lunch and fellowship**
- Introduce SWOT analysis (identify a group’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- Breakout: Apply SWOT analysis to one (or more) small groups
- Recap days events
- Encourage personal commitments to become ACTIVE members of at least one small group and apply what they have learned
- Prayer

Appendix A

Example Objectives of Small Group Ministry in Brazil

In 1990 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil started a stewardship and evangelism program with some specific goals in mind. The goals were to:

- Improve attendance for Services
- Offer a Continuous Christian Education program for members to grow in their discipleship
- Improve Evangelism and Stewardship
- Offer a leadership program to members.

Each year, the Synodical Church has a theme to be worked into all facets of the church. Themes since 2005 include:

- 2005: Born like Children of God
Emphasis on Children
- 2006: Molded by God's action
Emphasis on Youth
- 2007: United by God's love
Emphasis on Marriage
- 2008: Blessed with the presence of God
Emphasis on Family
- 2009: Accompanied by God
Emphasis on Singles
- 2010: Sharing experiences of life with God
Emphasis on The Elderly

As an example of how each small group acts on the theme, there is a National Youth gathering that relates to this national theme or maybe it's the same theme. Pastors receive some homiletics help and departments are provided with specific Bible Studies around this theme.

So, all levels of the congregation and Synodical church share this theme.

The strength of this program is the small group or family group. Families that are living close by or in the same geographic area are gathered for Bible Studies, based in this theme, for 8 Bible Studies. Each group is free to decide when, where and how they are studying the Bible Studies previously elaborated.

Some groups work for two months, once per week. Others are gathered once a month. Some groups opted for a "season": Spring Bible Studies, Fall Bible Studies, Lent Bible Studies, etc.

Each group has a leader who has previous training on the theme and who leads Bible Study.

The program also focuses on leadership and the pastor plays an important role in the program equipping leaders.

There is a coordinator for each group responsible for calling people, inviting them for the next meeting, and arranging to take care of those in need.

Members are free to bring friends, relatives and family members.

Inactive and new members (Evangelism) have been invited to these kinds of groups and many of them have joined into the local congregation.

When a congregation has too many groups, say 20 or 30, elders assist up to four or five groups each by being part of the Bible Studies and giving follow-up.

This program is oriented based on contemporary surveys like ones performed for Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. The surveys help explain why some congregations are growing more than others.

Growing congregations seem to share the following characteristics.

- Involve the Word of God and Sacraments
- Declare a Missions as a priority of the church work
- Offer different styles of Services and Bible Studies
- Have Pastors who point out the salvation of people as the main reason of the existence of the church
- Have Lay people involved in personal testimony of Christian faith
- Have People involved with the practice of prayer for the church and for those in need

One of the ideas that the program has settled on is the tri-dimensional basis for small groups. These three small-group “principles” are:

- Bible Study = Word of God = content
- Communion = fellowship = support
- Mission = task = purpose