



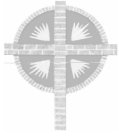
**St. Luke Lutheran Church
Surrey, British Columbia**

**Evaluation of new
worship service times and format
started in February 2001**

Report to Voters

By Eric Weiss
on behalf of the Board of Elders

November 2002



St. Luke Lutheran Church
Evaluation of new worship service times and format started in February 2001

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Executive summary

Developing a formal strategy for the future of St. Luke began over three years ago. The strategic planning process that the Vision Mission Planning (VMP) group undertook is described briefly in order to give some context to why worship service formats and times have changed. While St. Luke places a priority on meeting the needs of existing members, VMP wants to see St. Luke bring more people to Christ than it has in the past. In particular, St. Luke wants to reach out to youth and young families with children.

Even before VMP embarked on its formal strategic plan, elements of the plan were being incorporated at St. Luke. For example, St. Luke used to have a single Sunday worship service that began at 11:00 a.m. In March 1993, a more contemporary service format was instituted beginning at 8:45 a. m. This service format attempted to appeal to a younger group of people at St. Luke.

In addition to considering new programs and projects to accomplish the goals set out in the strategic plan, VMP also evaluated some existing initiatives. VMP recognized that the early morning start time made the contemporary service not as attractive to families with young children and youth as it might. Therefore, VMP, working with the Elders, tried to improve the format and the time of the contemporary worship service. In February 2001, the order of the traditional and contemporary Sunday worship services was essentially switched. The starting time for the contemporary service

was changed to 10:30 a.m., while the traditional service was moved forward to 9:00 a.m.

Other improvements were also made to the contemporary service. A new sound system was installed to facilitate the requirements of the worship team leaders. The church also raised funds and purchased a projector and screen so that the hymns and worship material could be easily seen by the congregation without having to follow along in weekly bulletins or a hymnal.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the success or failure of adopting the new worship service times and format in February 2001. Are we achieving the goals of the strategic plan by attracting more families to St. Luke? Are we still attending to the needs of existing members? To evaluate the success of the new service format and times, the Elders have solicited comments and reviewed available long-term statistics that are available through the Synod office. The Elders assumed that, by comparing statistics for 2001 to those recorded since the 1960's, a conclusion could be reached on the success of the new service format and times. Although there are over 80 statistics to choose from, the statistics the Elders chose to compare included church attendance, baptized membership, numbers of communicants, Sunday School enrollment and number of juniors confirmed.

Unfortunately, some of the measured statistics used for comparison contained some confounding information. For

example, the accuracy of worship-service-attendance statistics has been compromised by inconsistencies in counting methods over the years. In the case of memberships, the 2001 statistics report is known to include a significant number of members who left St. Luke prior to 2001. The “housekeeping” of our membership roll for 2001 has made a comparison to previous years problematic.

It is concluded that the changes in service format and times by themselves did not accomplish the goal of increasing average weekly attendance. However, the service format does not seem to have negatively impacted service attendance. Upon initiation of the new format and time changes, VMP considered that annual attendance or baptized membership figures could decline during the first year or two following the change.

The Elders recommend that:

- St. Luke continues with the current service format and times.
- St. Luke’s ministries of evangelism and missions focus on reaching out to our local community. Kent Turner (2001 Break Forth Conference) maintains we need to find a “felt need” in the community and fill it if we intend to grow. VMP has only begun to look at developing programs and projects to accomplish its goals and needs to focus on the activities of these ministries. Attendance at worship services will only grow with increased efforts in these ministries to complement the service format and times.
- To assist the Board of Missions, the youth group be asked to consider mission efforts in our local community for its 2003 mission project.
- The Nominating Committee develop an on-going plan to recruit capable volunteers to key ministry positions.
- The Board of Communications formulate a strategy that will ensure that the various programs and projects at St. Luke are communicated to the membership and to the community.
- Elders continue to listen to members and incorporate their suggestions where appropriate in fulfilling the vision, mission, and goals of St. Luke.
- Average weekly attendance, baptized membership, and Sunday School enrollment be used as performance measures in evaluating service format or other efforts in evangelism or missions.
- Staff ensure the methods of recording statistics are consistent from year to year.
- Ushers record the breakdown in weekly attendance between the traditional and contemporary services.



Background

In 1999, St. Luke's Vision Mission Planning group (VMP) began reviewing the results of research regarding the health of the church in today's world. Peter Mueller shared much of the information he was studying while attending Regent College at UBC. Peter showed VMP evidence that Church attendance is falling quickly in North America. The number of people entering ministry is falling at even a greater rate.

Some go so far as to say the Church is dying. In fact, some denominations have instituted "Ministries of Death" whose sole purpose is to settle legal and financial aspects associated with closing down individual congregations. It's a frightening thought.

However, in light of a general decline in church memberships, some churches are growing. Some are growing at exponential rates. For example, the Community Church of Joy in Arizona and the Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois have discarded traditional methods of operating a church in favor of an approach that better attracts new people to Christ. They concluded that maintaining and nurturing the needs of current members is important. However, doing this alone is a recipe for deteriorating the long-term health of the church. The church is under too much pressure in

today's society for such a strategy to be successful in the long term.

Churches that are successful in bringing more people to Christ seem to be abandoning a "neighborhood" church concept in favor of a "community" church concept. A neighborhood-based church is a maintenance-based church, relying on current members and their families to sustain the welfare of the church. Evangelism and local mission projects play a relatively minor role. A community-based church relies more on small-group ministries to nurture the needs of current members of the church. The church pursues an evangelistic and mission role, particularly on a local scale, using service formats, programs and projects aimed at recruiting new Christian members from the extended community.

St. Luke's strategic plan

St. Luke needs to decide what type of church it wants to be. The VMP sees the advantages of the community-based church approach. After several months of studying the reasons growing churches are successful, VMP agreed that St. Luke needs to take care of the welfare of its members, but also needs to think more globally on expanding its role and meaningfulness in today's society.

We needed to formulate a strong and coherent strategy for St. Luke's future. Ralph Kison led St. Luke's VMP through a strategic planning process that required us to look at why St. Luke exists, what is important to us, and what, if anything, do we need to continue to do or change to be an effective

church for current and future members.

Planning a strategy for St. Luke involved a number of steps, as shown in Table 1. These steps are discussed in relation to VMP's planning process in the following sections.

Table 1 – Steps in producing a strategic plan

- State a vision and mission
- Articulate values underlying the vision and mission
- Identify stakeholders who would be impacted by any long-term strategy
- Determine strengths and weaknesses for achieving the vision
- Embrace opportunities or overcome threats that stand in the way of accomplishing the vision
- Identify long-term, mid-term, and short-term goals for achieving the vision
- Implement programs and projects to achieve stated goals
- Identify performance measures upon which to measure program or project success
- Monitor the performance measures of programs and projects
- Evaluate the success of the programs and projects
- Review the plan at regular intervals



Our vision statement

Accordingly, the VMP first settled on its vision statement. This vision and mission statement is the first thing printed in the bulletin

each Sunday, and the first message one reads on walking through the front doors of St. Luke. It states:

Table 2 - Our vision and mission statements

By the power of the Holy Spirit, St. Luke Lutheran Church exists to:

- Bring people to Jesus and membership in His family
- Lead and nurture them to Christ-like maturity
- Equip them for their ministry in the church and life mission in the world

We achieve this by:

- Providing opportunities for regular worship and fellowship
- Providing educational opportunities for all
- Providing outreach, encouragement, and resources to groups and individuals in the church and the community
- Supporting both synodical and other mission endeavors

Values, stakeholders, and the SWOT analysis

VMP took several meetings to consider and articulate the values that underlie our vision and mission. We also identified stakeholders who would be impacted by our plan and what St. Luke's strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats were. The results of VMP's work are summarized in the attached appendices.

- **Appendix 1**
Values underlying St. Luke's vision and mission
- **Appendix 2**
Key stakeholders
- **Appendix 3**
Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This is also known as a SWOT analysis

Our goals

VMP identified long-, mid-, and short-term goals for St. Luke in May of 1999. A list of these goals is included in Appendix 4. Many of the short-term goals have been accomplished. For example, we have installed proper pews in the balcony and instituted a new service format and time for the contemporary service. However, other goals have not been achieved. For example, we were unsuccessful in calling a second full-time pastor.

Accomplishing our goals

Once goals complementing the vision and mission had been identified, the VMP began evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs, and identifying opportunities for new programs, projects, and ideas to accomplish those specific goals. For example, fellowship dynamics of a large church are quite different from the dynamics of a smaller church. Many growing churches ensure the spiritual welfare of current members through small-group ministries. St. Luke is in the fledgling stages of creating small-group ministries in preparation for growth in our numbers. In particular, Chris Peattie is working to have members of St. Luke aware of these small-group ministries and have them become more personally involved. Small groups, from Christ Care to Golden Agers, afford wonderful

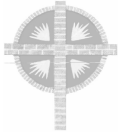
opportunities for members to interact with one another and share their faith. Nurturing fellowship is a powerful way to strengthen the church.

There are many small-group ministries at St. Luke, some of which have operated for years. Typically, one of their aims is to share one's faith through fellowship. Hopefully over the next few years more people will become more personally involved.

Chris is also making family ministry a priority. He organized the first family ministry conference in February 2002. The second annual conference was held this month. He also was instrumental in championing a parent-tot group that meets regularly each Tuesday evening.

Over the past few years, St. Luke has also focused on developing a strong plan for youth. We have had a youth worker on staff since the mid-1990s. The youth group is currently an important part of St. Luke. It is this group that has spearheaded two mission trips to Mexico to help spread the Word and help out those in need.

A growing church also requires that more people are brought to Christ. There needs to be an emphasis placed on evangelism and mission efforts. VMP looked at the demographics of Surrey and our local neighborhood and saw that young families with children and youth are likely to be the group



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within our community most in need of a church home.

St. Luke used to have a single Sunday worship service that began at 11:00 a.m. In March 1993, a more contemporary worship service format was started. The service, which began at 8:45 a.m., was conducted in a more modern style to try to attract more people to St. Luke, in particular, younger families.

Elders received requests from some of those attending the early contemporary service to change the start time of the service to a different time. The early morning start time for the contemporary service was not attractive to youth and families with young children. The service wasn't accomplishing the goals initially contemplated. Therefore, in February 2001, the Elders essentially reversed the order of the traditional and contemporary Sunday worship services to make the contemporary service more attractive to more young families. The starting time for the contemporary service was changed to 10:30 a.m., while the traditional service was moved forward to 9:00 a.m. The Sunday School opening was incorporated into the first 10 minutes of the contemporary service.

The Elders were faced with some challenges in selecting new service times. Timing of Sunday School, parking lot congestion between services, and the Korean Church's and Trinity Lutheran Church for the Deaf's start times needed to be considered. The times

selected were considered the best at the time, but the Elders committed to the Voters to evaluate the effectiveness of the new service times after an 18-month trial period.

The next section describes the Elders' attempt to evaluate the success of the format and time changes.

Evaluation of new service times and format

The Elders recorded comments that members voiced since the initiation of the change in worship service format. Most comments were received shortly after the new times and format were implemented. Comments included:

- Several young families welcomed and appreciated the changes. Several families have since chosen to attend the contemporary service rather than simply chauffeuring their children to and from Sunday School.
- Several comments were received that the projector made it easier and more convenient to follow a service than reading from a bulletin or hymnal.
- Several elderly members indicated that the problem of attending an early morning service has been transferred to them. Many elderly members find the earlier service time difficult to get to.

- One member indicated that the projector screen covered the cross at the front of the church and that this was not appropriate
- Some people who typically attended the 11:00 a.m. traditional service and now attended the 10:30 contemporary service complained that the music was too loud
- One member suggested that at least one traditional hymn be included during the contemporary service
- Some members indicated that they would leave St. Luke as a result of the new service times
- One member recently asked when the one-service format would be re-instituted

Performance measures

The Elders determined that a set of statistics that are submitted to the Synod office each year was an appropriate source upon which to evaluate the effectiveness of the new worship service times and format. Over 80 different statistics are archived annually. The Elders selected five which they thought best measured the success or failure of the new worship service times and format. The statistics include:

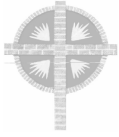
- Worship service attendance
- Baptized membership
- Number of communicants per year
- Sunday School enrollment
- Number of juniors confirmed

Other statistics were not analyzed because it was thought that interpreting results would be difficult. For example, comparison of financial contributions or net worth of the church was not felt to be a good measure for comparison because numbers would need to take into account inflation over the comparison period. Also, the influence of special fund raisers, special offerings, etc., over time couldn't easily be accounted for. Other statistics were either considered a subset of the performance measures selected, or simply not appropriate for analysis.

The Elders received Synod reports from our records that dated back to 1960, with some years missing.

When the Elders began reviewing these statistics in detail, several unanticipated complications became apparent.

- All statistics are applicable to the whole of calendar years. Although the new service format began in February 2001, available data necessitated that statistics from January to December 2001 be compared with previous years. Therefore, a simplifying assumption was made that the new service format began in January 2001 for the purpose of comparisons. With the exception of Sunday School enrollment and number of confirmed juniors, data from January 2002 onward are not yet compiled.
- The report submitted by staff for 2001 unfortunately included



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“house-cleaning” corrections. People who were no longer members of St. Luke through transfers, deaths, etc., had not been accurately reported to the Synod for several years prior to 2001. In 2001, the report to the Synod indicated that 87 baptized members were lost during the year. Upon the Elders’ request, staff reviewed these submitted numbers and estimated that at least 21 of these reported losses should have been allocated to

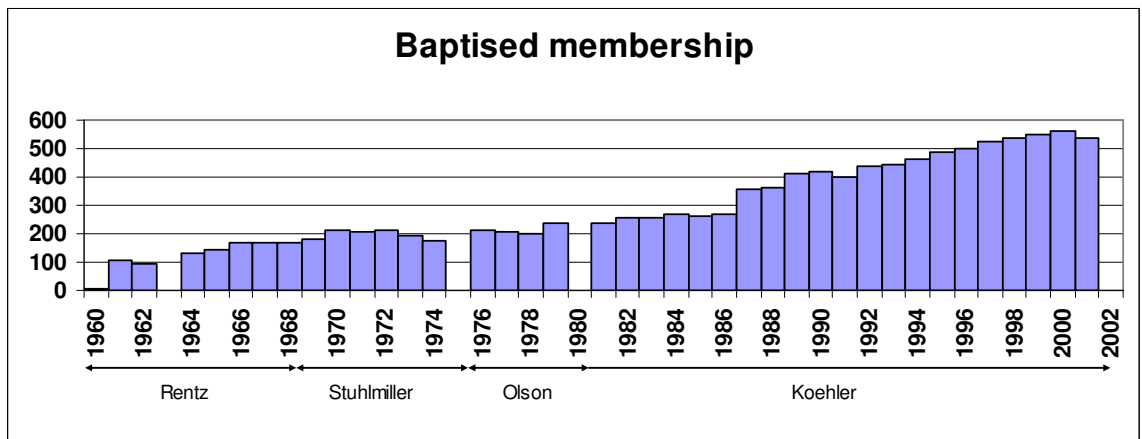
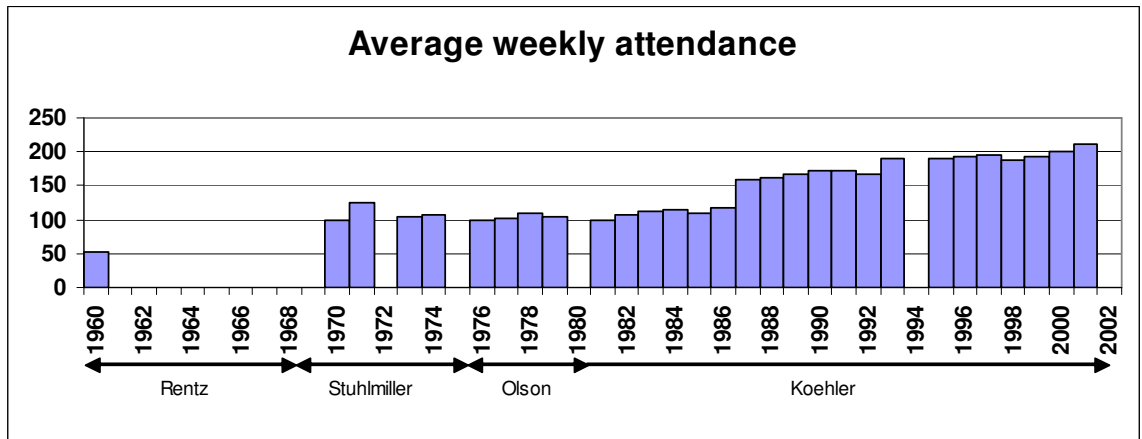
membership transfers or deaths in previous years. The Elders made the simplifying assumption that one-third of these (seven members) would be attributed to having left in each of the three previous years; 1998, 1999, and 2000.

- Over the years, St. Luke’s methods for counting attendance at church or Sunday School have changed. Differences in methods include ushers counting or not counting children during the service.

Evaluating the statistics

Graphs of statistics over time for church attendance, baptized membership, number of communicants, Sunday School enrollment, and number of juniors confirmed are shown below.

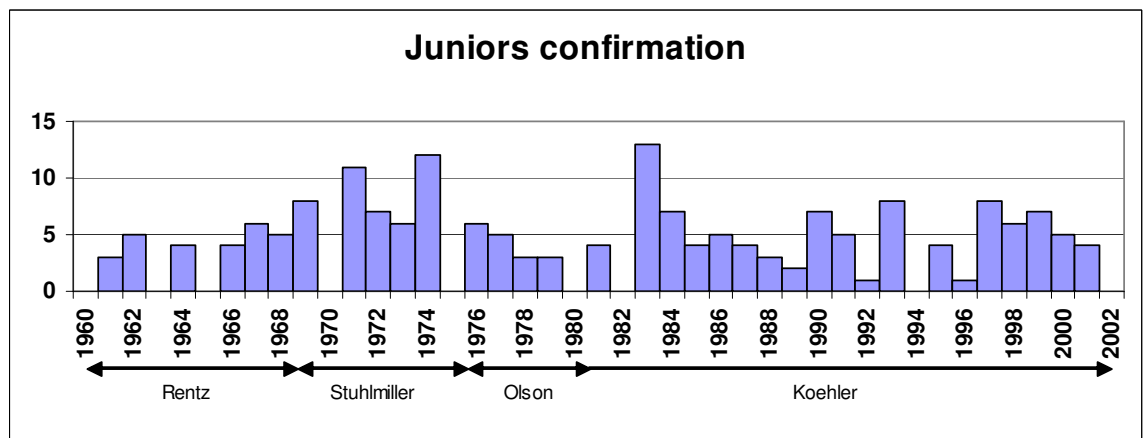
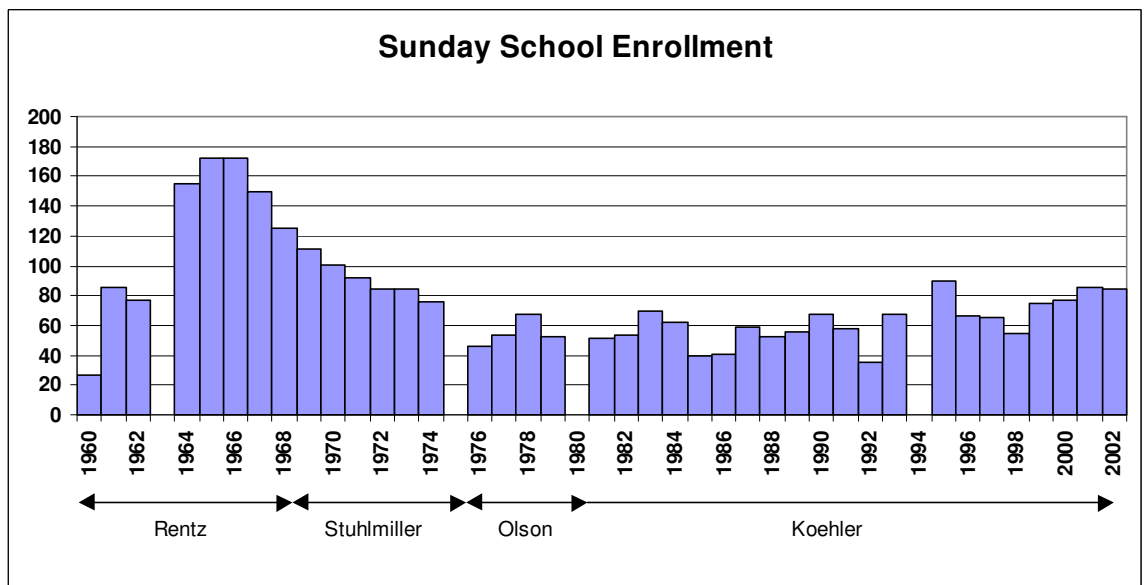
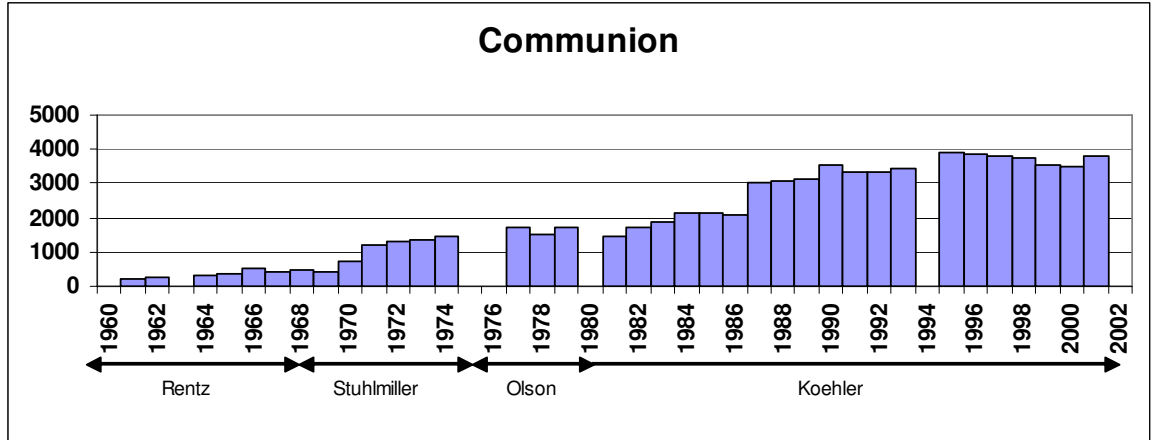
For interest, the terms of St. Luke's pastors are also shown. Note too, that the new church was constructed in 1986.



Note that the membership figures for 2001 included housecleaning of members who had left St. Luke in previous years. Pastor indicated that at least 21 members should be attributed to previous years. It is assumed that these members were lost to St. Luke evenly over the preceding 3 years. The graph above shows the adjustment made to 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001.



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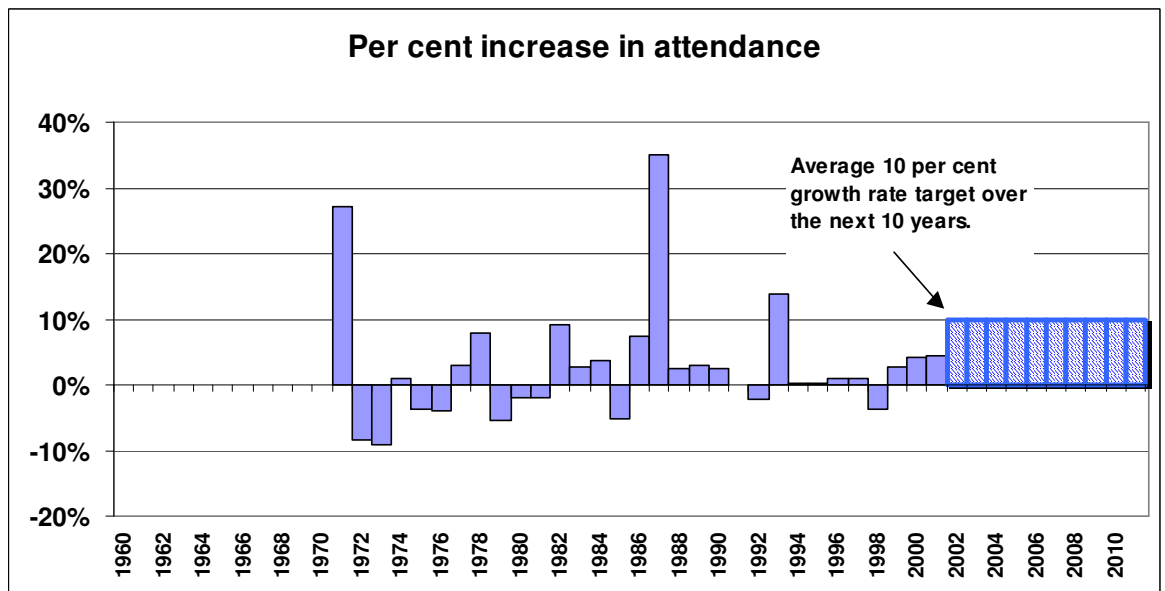
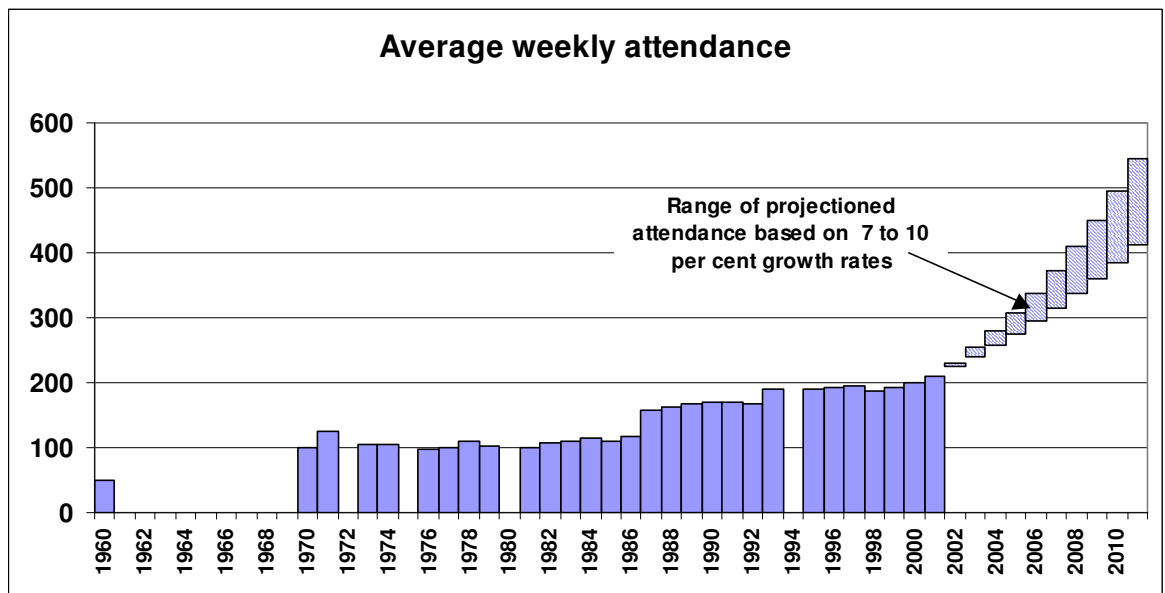


Note that the confirmed juniors in 1983 included those confirmands who were to be confirmed in 1982. There were no confirmands in 1982 and 1994. Data for 1963, 1965, 1970, 1975, and 1980 are missing.

Observations

Attendance: If a church maintains its average service attendance from year to year, it is doing very well in comparison to other congregations throughout North America. St. Luke has done well in this regard. Over the past decade, St. Luke has had an average annual increase of 2.5 per cent in worship attendance.

The increase in average attendance from 2000 to 2001 was 4.5 per cent. The rate of growth last year was not significantly different from that over the past ten years. It is below the goal of the VMP to grow at a rate of between 7 and 10 per cent.





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Baptized membership: It appears that St. Luke has lost more members than it gained in 2001. However, other growing churches, such as Willow Creek, first experienced significant drops in membership when it first changed its focus from a neighborhood- to community-based church. Only after the initial growing pains was exponential growth observed.

As a note of interest, the 35 per cent increase in church attendance in 1987 came in the year following the construction of the church at its current location.

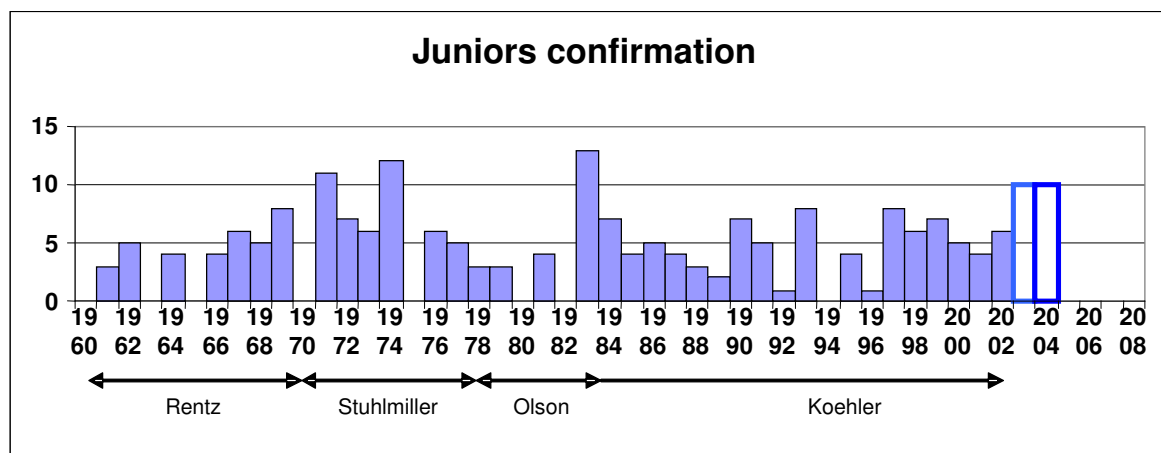
Communion: Communion attendance seems not to have varied or increased significantly over the past decade. It is unlikely the change in service times or format has had an effect on the numbers communing.

Sunday School enrollment: Sunday School enrollment in 2001 was the same as

it was the previous year. There does not seem to have been an impact due to the change in service format or times.

Looking at Sunday School enrollment in combination with average attendance shows some dramatic and interesting results. Average attendance in the mid 1960's is estimated to have been around 75. It is now about 200, almost 3-fold increase. On the other hand, Sunday School enrollment peaked at about 160 children in 1965, twice the number enrolled this year. Combining these statistics, the ratio of children in Sunday School to worship service attendance has dropped a remarkable 6-fold over the past 30 years! This result could be attributable to such things as different in family structures over time, the introduction of Sunday shopping, and plethora of children now being enrolled in sporting activities.

Juniors confirmed: It is difficult to glean much information



from the difference in numbers of juniors confirmed over the years. It is encouraging, however, that we currently have 22 youth enrolled in first and second year of confirmation studies.

Other comments:

Recruiting volunteers is a difficult task. Ask anyone on the Nominating Committee! This is certainly true in the case of Sunday School teachers. As a result, teachers are unable to take breaks from week to week because there are not enough of them to spell one another off. As a result, Sunday School teachers have stated that they are never able to attend the 10:30 contemporary service as they would like to.

There is now a maximum of one-half hour between services on Sunday mornings. As a result, Pastor no longer conducts Sunday-morning Bible studies. Small groups, such as Christ Care and Golden Agers, are conducting Bible studies and helping to fill this vital need.

Coffee and cookies in the one-half hour between Sunday morning services was to provide a venue for both services to mingle in fellowship. In reality, not many of those attending the contemporary service come early to take part in this fellowship. Recently, coffee has been provided after both services.



Conclusions and recommendations

The service format and time changes have not succeeded in achieving mid- to long-term goals by the VMP. The increase in average weekly attendance grew at a rate of 4.5 per cent in 2001. The VMP goal is to have attendance grow by 7 to 10 per cent annually over the next 10 years.

However, the service format and time changes do not seem to have negatively impacted our growth compared to previous years.

The following table shows the Elders recommendations.

Table 3 - Recommendations

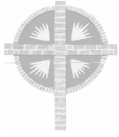
- St. Luke continues with the current service format and times.
- St. Luke's ministries of evangelism and missions focus on reaching out to our local community. Kent Turner (2001 Break Forth Conference) maintains we need to find a "felt need" in the community and fill it if we intend to grow. VMP has only begun to look at developing programs and projects to accomplish its goals and needs to focus on the activities of these ministries. Attendance at worship services will only grow with increased efforts in these ministries to complement the service format and times.
- To assist the Board of Missions, the youth group be asked to consider mission efforts in our local community for its 2003 mission project.
- The Nominating Committee develop an on-going plan to recruit capable volunteers to key ministry positions.
- The Board of Communications formulate a strategy that will ensure that the various programs and projects at St. Luke are communicated to the membership and to the community.
- Elders continue to listen to members and incorporate their suggestions where appropriate in fulfilling the vision, mission, and goals of St. Luke.
- Average weekly attendance, baptized membership, and Sunday School enrollment be used as performance measures in evaluating service format or other efforts in evangelism or missions.
- Staff ensure the methods of recording statistics are consistent from year to year.
- Ushers record the breakdown in weekly attendance between the traditional and contemporary services.

Appendix 1

Values underlying the vision and mission of St. Luke Lutheran Church

Our values include:

- Godly-servant leadership
- A well-mobilized lay ministry
- Bible-centered preaching
- Evangelism welcoming all people in a culturally relevant way
- All people – children, youth, and adults of all ages
- Prayer- personal and corporate
- Excellence, creativity, and innovation
- An atmosphere that encourages fellowship and friendship
- A grace and faith orientation
- Praise and worship
- Financial responsibility
- Development of effective families
- Sacrificial giving of resources, including time, talent, and treasures
- Continual Christian education and learning for all ages
- Repentance, forgiveness, and “agape” love in personal and congregational relationships.



Appendix 2

Stakeholders impacted by St. Luke's vision and mission

Key internal stakeholders that the VMP identified included:

- God
- Staff
- Active and non-active members
- Home-bound members
- Attendees
- Committees
- Music and other small groups
- Sunday School
- Believers and non-believers
- Major donors, donors, non-donors

Key external stakeholders that the VMP identified included:

- Christendom
- World church, including other denominations, missionaries, etc.
- Local Christian congregations. We need to let them know what we are doing to share with them and to prevent "sheep" stealing.
- Para-church, such as Camp Luther, Wagner Hills Farm, Mt. Seymour, etc.
- Past members who require church service, such as at funerals, weddings, baptisms, Easter, Christmas, etc.
- Families of members
- Our individual and corporate neighbors
- Concordia and other Christian seminaries and schools
- Church users who are non-members
- People for whom we pray
- Synod
- Suppliers of consumable goods and utility providers
- Professional services, such as accountants, architects, lawyers, contractors, etc.
- Community, including the immediate neighborhood, Surrey, counselors, etc.
- Future generations
- Organizations, such as the Canadian Lutheran World Relief organization, Lutheran Life, CEF, etc.
- Benevolent support groups with special funding requirements for refugees and world relief
- Special needs of addicts, homeless, the poor, etc.
- Other extra-congregational groups served by staff, such as Breakforth and Synod committees
- Associates of St. Luke, like Lynn Gergens
- Government

Appendix 3

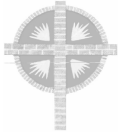
SWOT Analysis: Our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Our strengths include:

- People possessing a variety of gifts. We are particularly blessed in the area of music
- VMP- structured, prayer-led process
- Friendly, open, welcoming hospitality
- Vision – through the VMP
- Financial strength
- Staff- dynamic, energetic, positive, competent people with a variety of gifts
- Good grasp on real situation regarding resources, members, and growth
- Music
- More-than-adequate worship tools
- Adequate technology for administration
- Optimistic congregation with a positive and optimistic pastor
- Growth with the number of young families to the congregation
- Various strategically-connected ministries

Our weaknesses include:

- The need to clarify our understanding of the Triune God presented to the community and those attending St. Luke
- Staff organization to increase involvement by other lay members
- Members need to all be of voting member status
- Lack of membership attendance at meetings
- Getting members to participate in small groups
- Following up with absent members
- Structures to provide pastoral care when the church grows
- Lack of volunteer for teaching Sunday School, ushering, greeting, etc.
- Facilities for music groups
- Program for identifying and reaching home-bound members
- Communicating the difference between believers and non-believers, and making the “Sunday-to-Monday” connection



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Our opportunities include:

- Getting to know our neighbors in the community
- Identifying and addressing the needs of our community
- Informing the community of St. Luke's vision
- Providing financial support to para-church organizations
- Supplying councilors from our church to serve on para-church organizations
- Sending our children to Camp Luther
- Extending our Christian life to the rest of the week
- Increasing our presence in other external organizations
- Following up with past members
- Identifying and setting up programs of outreach for family members
- Door-to-door outreach and evangelism in our neighborhood
- Encourage our young members to attend Concordia and other Christian-based schools
- Invite Christian-school graduates and faculty to speak to St. Luke
- Advertise our church and the values we hold
- Advertise the programs and small groups within St. Luke to members and the community

Our threats include:

- Our violent community, break-ins to the church requiring alarms and gates to keep people out
- Surrey is a community in transition with many transients
- Society's anti-Christian sentiment and persecution of the church
- Youth leaving the church
- High rate of family mobility
- Satan
- Secularism, quasi- or diluted spiritualism
- Changing government policies and tax regulations
- Overcoming the perception that the church is non-responsive to society's needs, is outdated, and not professionally managed
- Organized church has caused a great deal of harm in the past
- Church is for weak people and hypocrites

Appendix 4

Long-, mid-, and short-term goals to achieve St. Luke's vision and mission

VMP identified goals for St. Luke in May of 1999. These goals included:

Long-term goals (5 -10 years)

- Growth rate to be between 7 and 10 per cent per year
(Revised in January 2002)
- More educational facilities
- Larger facilities
- Three full-time pastors
- Have a pastor from our membership become ordained
- One full-time youth minister for grades 6 and under
- One full-time youth minister for grades 7 and up
- One vicar
- Day-time building usage by a school

Mid-term goals (2-5 years)

- Two full-time pastors
- One vicar
- Growth rate to be between 7 and 10 per cent per year
(Revised in January 2002)
- Expand the church building
- One full-time youth worker
- Daytime pre-school
- Establish a fund for full-time ministry students in our membership

Short-term goals (2-5 years)

- Two full-time pastors
- One full-time youth worker
- Proper pews for the balcony
- Special needs ministry for adults and children and teachers and assistants.
- Establish a fund for building expansion to achieve the mid-term goals
- Begin succession planning for staff and lay-ministry
- Communicate strategy through the pulpit, council, and other groups
- Improve communication within the congregation to have members as excited as VMP about St. Luke's vision
- Evaluate worship service format changes. The worship service format was changed in February 2001 to achieve other goals
- Conduct performance evaluations of staff and lay ministry to address accountability