

Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church

Family Ministry Workshop

February 22, 2014

Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church conducted its second family ministry workshop on February 22, 2014. Jim Blockus facilitated the workshop. As an introduction, Jim reviewed Calvary's mission statement and the responsibilities of the Board of Education and the Board for Youth. Jim also reviewed the key points identified in the workshop that was conducted in February 2013.

As was done last year, each participant was assigned to one of three specific discussion breakout groups. The breakout groups were Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and Young Adult Ministry. The facilitator of the Children's Ministry group was Christine Kraus; the facilitator of the Youth Ministry group was Jane Neagley; and the facilitator of the Young Adult Ministry group was Stephanie Yerger.

The groups were charged with reviewing the key points from last year and evaluating them to ensure their current validity. The groups were then tasked to begin developing action plans to implement the ideas that are practicable for implementation.

For the children (birth to 6th grade), the key points identified for review were curricula, Sunday School closings, Baptismal birthdays, offering envelopes, Cradle Roll, Bibles for 3rd graders, devotions, LCEF, children's sermons, increasing active roles in worship, resuming VBS, and increasing displays of accomplishments.

For the youth, the group was tasked to look at the reasons for the stagnation of youth ministry, identify how youth can be involved in worship activities, how to implement a shadowing program, how to get youth to organize and lead events, and establish plans to attend the next National Youth Gathering in 2016.

For young adults, the focus group was charged to key in on increasing personal contact, identify what can be done to send care packages to college students and those in the military, developing plans for highlighting young adults in the *Comment*, implementing a focus group to explore young adult ideas, and establishing a young adult to youth mentorship program.

For the **Children's Ministry** group, many of the members of this group are either on the Board of Education or are Sunday School teachers. The group established a timeline in which it will facilitate and/or implement action plans for three key areas. The timeline the group established is March 2014 through May 2015.

The group focused on three main areas of effort: Provide Opportunities for Deliberate Participation of Children, Youth, and Families in the Worship of the Church; Reintroduce the Practice of Children's

Sermons; and Increase the Visibility of the Sunday School. This group and the Board of Education will work with the pastor, the Deacons, and the Board for Youth to evaluate, plan, and implement as appropriate the strategies identified under these areas of effort. Key points from the discussion for the three areas are listed below.

1. Discuss and implement actions to invite families with children to light the respective Advent candles on the Advent wreath prior to the start of Divine Worship.
2. Consult with the pastor to determine the appropriateness of having a youth, parent, or grandparent read an Advent message introducing the significance of the Advent season.
3. Consult with the pastor to invite families to bring the elements of the Eucharist to the altar.
4. Involve the children and youth in special services, such as Tenebrae, using the children and youth as a speech choir.
5. Expand opportunities for the youth to serve, such as lay readers, ushers, and greeters.
6. Provide opportunities for the children and youth to sing as part of the worship service several times throughout the liturgical year.
7. Utilize the bulletin information series, "Kids in the Divine Service."
8. Consult with the pastor to reintroduce children's sermons by either the pastor or a lay member.
9. Develop strategies to increase the visibility of the Sunday School, such as identifying and displaying accomplishments and other projects.

The **Youth** breakout group opened its session discussing Calvary's mission statement. The group discussed using the youth as greeters. The group also discussed establishing a youth area at the Sunday social hour, as well as having the youth host a social hour. The group discussed doing more service projects, to include helping with VBS and the clothing closet.

The **Young Adult** group reviewed its five areas of focus from the 2013 workshop. The group combined two focus areas, *increasing personal contact with young adults in the congregation* and *sending care packages to young adult members who are attending college or serving in the active duty military*. For the college age young adults attending Calvary as visitors, the focus should be on continuing to extend the hand of friendship to them and inviting them to the various activities at Calvary. Regarding those college students who are away and those serving in an active duty military role, several key steps were identified to increase and maintain positive contact with them.

The first step is to ensure the church office has and maintains school year and military addresses. The second step is to contact LCMS churches near the college or active duty station and inform them our young parishioners are in the area to increase the likelihood that they will have the opportunity for Word and Sacrament ministry. A third step is to establish a communication link from Calvary to the college student/military member at least twice during the year, providing newsletters and other mailings. This portion could involve using the youth group to lead this effort. A final step would be to integrate these steps with the Operation Barnabas committee to coordinate and combine efforts for more effectiveness.

The second focus area discussed was *establishing a young adult to youth mentorship* program. The group felt the members of the youth group would be those who would be mentored. Jim Blockus offered to assist with this effort.

The third focus area, *highlighting various young adult members in the "Calvary Comment,"* would give the congregation an opportunity to learn more about our younger adults. This effort might also increase personal contact among the members, as well as provide occasions for the emergence of individual time and talent opportunities. This focus area could also involve the Caring Deacons' program and the Board for Evangelism.

The *focus group of young adults to discuss how Calvary can meet their needs* has not been formed as of this time. Pastor Zimmerman discussed the possibility of young families with similar interests getting together, using church facilities, etc. The discussion turned to how the congregation might react to these things, whether cliques or factions would develop, etc. Finally, the group noted there are few Synod resources for reaching young adults and young families. Until recently, the only Synod resource was from 1985. On a final note, the group noted that many young adults fall away from parish life until they start families. This observed fact underscores the need to strengthen ministry to the children and youth of Calvary.

Summary:

As the beginning of the action plans or steps to strengthen our family ministry efforts continue, it is imperative we, as a parish, develop actionable timelines, identify key personnel to help us move forward, and develop ways in which we can follow up in our ministry efforts. Strengthening our family ministry efforts will have the benefits of keeping our members in Word and Sacrament ministry for an earthly lifetime, provide increased opportunities for Evangelism, and strengthen the nurturing efforts of the various boards of the congregation.

As these groups look at specific steps to carry out the ideas given more flesh this year, we urge the members of the congregation to engage with each other, support our families, children, and youth. Encouragement in the Faith will help strengthen our brothers and sisters in Christ. The participants have concluded these efforts need to be ongoing. A follow on workshop will be conducted no later than late winter, 2015. The three sub-groups should be prepared to present status and timelines for accomplishment of the actions and activities they have identified this year. Refinements of the focus areas will also be conducted so we may institutionalize our efforts.

The congregation is invited to provide comments and other input to Pastor Zimmerman and Jim Blockus.

Jim Blockus, Workshop Facilitator
Soli Deo Gloria
April 17, 2014