



Augustana Lutheran Church

Comprehensive Ministry Review Final Report

Part 3 AFFIRMATIONS

The Synod Review Team (SRT) affirms the following aspects of Augustana Lutheran's ministry:

Identity

1. The SRT affirms the presence of a lot of caring people in the congregation.
2. The SRT affirms your understanding that the congregation needs to let go of the past (people that have left, people who have died, connections with the past) in order to move on with your ministry. One of your leaders put it this way, "We need to define ourselves, prune, refresh, and renew.
3. The SRT affirms that you view yourselves as a congregation that wants to get back on track.
4. The SRT affirms the significant participation (45% of your worship attendance) in the *Unbinding the Heart* small group experience and your anticipation that this experience will build relationships, help you define yourself and your ministry, and renew the church.
5. The SRT affirms that you understand establishing honest and clear communication is a priority.
6. The SRT affirms that you identify prayer as the core of your ministry and your life together.
7. The SRT affirms that you listened to the voices of those who pointed out that Augustana might not be as welcoming as some think it to be. We affirm your desire to be more open and welcoming to visitors and to each other.
8. The SRT affirms your heritage of lay people stepping up and leading during times of pastoral transitions.
9. The SRT affirms that you see yourselves as a congregation that values its heritage and yet wants to be progressive.

Worship

1. The SRT affirms that you have listened to members and try to provide meaningful worship for a variety of people.
2. The SRT affirms the establishment of a hand bell choir, the variety of ages in the hand bell choir, and the enthusiasm that is being generated.
3. The SRT affirms your summer outdoor worship services.
4. The SRT affirms your noisy offering as a way to include kids.
5. The SRT heard and affirms that children are welcomed as children in worship.
6. The SRT heard and affirms the way that council members are able talk about the purpose of worship and what worship means for them.

Learning/Faith Formation

1. The SRT affirms your Wednesday School which attracts non-members and neighborhood children.

Children/Youth Ministries

1. The SRT affirms your creativity in events like the intergenerational ice fishing event
2. The SRT affirms the “Hey” ministry with youth and its beginning to be invigorated again by parent leadership.

Hospitality and Fellowship

1. The SRT affirms your potlucks, Palm Sunday brunch, and widespread involvement in God’s Work; Our Hands.
2. The SRT affirms your Lenten evenings with soup suppers with Holden Evening Prayer.
3. Although we didn’t see it in action, the SRT affirms your program of encouraging people to share a few words on a recommended topic during the sharing of the peace.

Visitors & New Members

1. The SRT affirms that you have greeters by all the many doors through which people enter worship.
2. The SRT affirms that you recognize the need for a more intentional welcome for visitors.
3. The SRT affirms your welcoming new members at worship and through a brunch the previous Saturday hosted by members of the congregation.

Sharing the Good News

1. The SRT affirms your small group experience with *Unbinding the Heart* and the new life that it seems to be awakening in the congregation.
2. The SRT affirms your using the gifts of lay people in telling their God Story during Lenten worship.
3. The SRT affirms the way that council members and leaders are able to articulate what it means to them to be followers of Jesus.
4. The SRT affirms your new mission statement, *Celebrate Jesus! Live the Love!*

Local Context/Social Ministry

1. The SRT affirms Augustana’s leadership and participation in the *5th Quarter* post game activities at the High School.
2. The SRT affirms your members involvement in Ruby’s Pantry and food distribution
3. The SRT affirms the way you open your doors for community events and school events.
4. The SRT affirms the way you use noisy offering to highlight programs and projects in the community.
5. The SRT affirms your providing the St. Lucia event for the whole community.

Stewardship

1. The SRT affirms that you have a yearly stewardship emphasis.
2. The SRT affirms the congregation's generous response to special needs and projects.
3. The SRT affirms that you have talked about having monthly stewardship emphases.

Finances

1. The SRT affirms that you have paid off your mortgage.
2. The SRT affirms that you have non-restricted money in the bank to help you ride out difficult times or times of transition.
3. The SRT affirms that following the resignation of the previous finance committee and their absence from church both the pastor and lay people in the congregation have attempted reconciliation.

Facilities

1. The SRT affirms your facility, a facility that will be able to meet future needs.
2. The SRT affirms that Augustana has two worship spaces so that as maintenance on the older worship space becomes impractical, the congregation will not face a major building program.

Governance & Administration

1. The SRT affirms that you have a committee structure in place that has the same struggles (shortage of committed members) as many other congregations.

Involvement with the Larger Church

1. The SRT affirms your participation in the in ELCA World Hunger program, Malaria Appeal, LWR, Lutheran Disaster Response, LWR quilting and other projects.
2. The SRT affirms that you have plans to work with one of the synod mission tellers to help the congregation understand what we do together as a church.

Part 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Synod Review Team makes the following recommendations for Augustana Lutheran's ministry:

Identity

1. There is a lot of grief in the congregation: grieving significant people in the life of the congregation who have died, people who have left for other congregations and grief occasioned by the inevitable changes in congregational life. The SRT recommends that you explore liturgical ways to name the losses of people who have died or moved on from this congregation, to celebrate the gifts of the past and then celebrate the people who are here and ready to walk together into a more hopeful future. Celebrate Christ and the gifts you have received and have among you as you begin to live the love here and in the community. This could be a way to announce and pray for new directions or a new ministry niche for the congregation. It might be helpful to have someone from the outside lead this rededication service. This does not need to be rushed, but should come after a time of planning and prayer.
2. Community members see Augustana as a safe place, a partner in the community and a gracious host. The SRT recommends that you continue to find and expand ways in which you use your excellent facilities and commercial kitchen as a community *and neighborhood* resource.
3. The SRT recommends that as you seek your ministry niche in the community you gather groups to pray for your ministry: your worship service, learning ministry, fellowship ministry, out reach into the community. Other groups could begin to explore your mission statement and how it can be lived out in concrete ways within the congregation, in your financial stewardship and budgeting, in dealing with your legacy building and maintenance projects, in your outreach to the community, in the way in which congregation members treat one another, in the way in which we speak with one another about conflict. Your mission statement could be elaborated on in various ways for varied

situations. Celebrate Jesus, Live the Love in Planning our Budget. Celebrate Jesus, Live the Love by Greeting Someone You Don't Know. Celebrate Jesus, Live the Love in the Ways in which we Talk about Disagreement in the Congregation. Celebrate Jesus, Live the Love by Sitting with a Visitor at Coffee Hour. Celebrating Jesus and Living the Love are so much easier in the abstract and so much more challenging when we deal with real people and real conflicts.

Worship

1. The SRT recommends that the congregation begin to rebuild the worship committee.
2. The SRT recommends that the worship committee find ways to employ the gifts of middle and high school aged students in worship.
3. The SRT recommends that the worship committee work on building up the praise band.
4. The SRT recommends that the worship committee and an action team begin to prayerfully consider the purpose and goals of worship and how worship can be used to build community and relationships. Use your understanding about the purpose and goals of worship to make decisions about worship times, worship styles, and the space for worship.
5. The SRT recommends that the congregation begin parallel discussions on the purpose and goals of worship. Is worship about my preferences, taste, and convenience? What am I willing to give up (put up with) to attract new worshippers? What am I willing to give up (put up with) because my neighbor in the pew enjoys it?
6. The SRT recommends that you explore a partnership with the school to teach hand bells to any students who are interested. Could Augustana sponsor a community hand bell choir or share the hand bells with another congregation?

Learning/Faith Formation

1. The SRT recommends that you look at young adult ministry. Meet in a coffee shop. Hymns and beer, Beer and Bible.

Children/Youth Ministries

1. The SRT recommends that you work to recruit parents and other interested adults for a youth committee.
2. The SRT recommends that you consider making some events like the ice fishing intergenerational.
3. The SRT recommends that your youth and their leaders start gearing up now for National Youth Gathering in Houston.

Hospitality and Fellowship

2. The SRT recommends that when you think about changes in your facility you consider the value of a convenient flow from worship into the coffee and fellowship space so that people don't find it easier to leave than gather for coffee and fellowship.
3. The SRT recommends that you take a second look at the "friendliness" of the congregation. How are visitors welcomed? Are they invited to coffee? Consider inviting someone from the synod office to teach some one-to-one conversation skills. Help people understand that coffee is about reaching out to those who are new as much as it is about relationships with people you already know.
4. The SRT recommends that you initiate a program with the local *ministerium* to send anonymous visitors to worship in one another's congregations and make a report about greeting, friendliness, invisible signs, and obstacles. The visitor would fill out the report and one of the *ministerium* members would collect them and give them to the pastor. That information gathered on friendliness and welcome would be shared with the hospitality committee, council, and in a digested form with the congregation. Contact Pastor Dave Anderson for visitor forms that could be used.

Visitors & New Members

1. The SRT recommends that you develop ways of getting contact information from visitors and following up through mail, email, or dropping off a gift (the congregation used to deliver homemade bread to visitors).
2. The SRT recommends that during your new member brunches, members or council members engage new members by asking about interests and talents. A list of the gifts of new members could then be compiled and used to involve them in the ministry of the congregation.
3. The SRT recommends that new members be assigned a “buddy” who, during the first year, will invite the new people to events, sit with them at coffee, introduce them to others and based on their interests, help get them involved.
4. The SRT recommends that you free Pastor Randy’s time before and after the worship services so that he can talk to members and visitors.

Sharing the Good News

1. The SRT recommends that you find ways to invite more people to participate in *Unbinding the Heart* and find a way to continue this valuable small group experience with those who are already involved.
2. The SRT recommends that you engage those who drop off their children on Sunday by meeting them in the parking lot, offering them a cup of coffee to go (and maybe a cookie), assuring them that their children will be well taken care of, and sending them on their way.

Local Context/Social Ministry

1. The SRT recommends that you find ways to get to know your neighbors within a three (?) block radius by inviting them to a meal or coffee and dessert. Intentionally engage them in conversation about what it is like to live in the neighborhood and what needs they see in the neighborhood.
2. The SRT recommends that if a neighborhood need is uncovered you invite your neighbors to participate in a God’s Work; Our Hands project to address those needs.
3. The SRT recommends that you think of more ways to involve and be involved with the community. Can God’s Work; Our Hands be made into a community wide event? Could you have a presence at Rutabaga Days doing something fun like giving away free popcorn or cotton candy?

Stewardship

1. The SRT recommends that the council spend time reading and discussing Mark Allan Powell’s *Giving to God*.

Finances

1. The SRT recommends that the Finance Committee look at raising money to pay for the secretary’s benefits and make sure that both the pastor and secretary are receiving synod guidelines for salary, housing allowance, and benefits. If a 1.2 million addition can be paid off in 9 years you can afford to pay guidelines. You are not a church that is struggling.
2. The SRT recommends that decisions about staff compensation be made well ahead of the annual meeting and the reasons those decision are made widely publicized. Defending those decisions is not the pastor’s job, but that of those who made the decision, the council.
3. The SRT recommends that you make a pledge to always talk about finances in the context of your mission, i.e., what God is calling you to do, in the context of the abundance with which God has blessed you as a congregation and as individuals, and what giving is in the context of Celebrating Christ and Living the Love.
4. The SRT recommends that membership in the finance committee and stewardship committee be drawn from people who have experience with *Unbinding the Heart* and can articulate the mission of the church and why we give.
5. The SRT recommends that the finance committee and the council reevaluate giving at the end of the first and second quarter. Where are trends going? Do you need a special offering?

Facilities

1. The SRT recommends proceeding with the facilities committee study of building maintenance and future viability of the legacy worship space. Lay out the facts of the cost of maintaining the legacy building in an atmosphere that encourages people to think of it in the context of your mission. How can we best use our resources (money, facilities) to Celebrate Christ! Live the Love! Especially when living the love means loving and serving our neighbors, doing for others more than for ourselves?
2. If a decision is made to do without the legacy worship space, the SRT recommends that you gather members from traditional space and contemporary space worshippers to think about how incorporating traditional elements from the legacy space might enhance worship in the Great Hall for all worshippers. Could some stained glass windows, and some fixtures be incorporated? What would make the Great Hall feel more like "home" to legacy building worshippers? A plan could be made to share other things from the old worship space (pews for example) with congregations that need those items.

Governance & Administration

1. The SRT recommends that you look at the committee structure to evaluate how many are functioning well, and if not, then determining what needs to change. Is the committee structure more elaborate than your present needs?

Involvement with the Larger Church

1. The SRT recommends that you proceed with your plan to get a mission teller, perhaps seeking to have a mission teller from Augustana trained.
2. The SRT recommends that you promote the Lay School of Ministry within the congregation, particularly among those who have completed *Unbinding the Heart*.

General Recommendations

1. The congregation has gone through a number of difficult transitions. The SRT recommends that you have a worship service that briefly explains and closes the discussion about personnel issues (dismissal of organist) and budget (compensation package for Pr. Randy and financial committee members leaving the church). The service could move from clarification, to asking for forgiveness for any perceived wrong doing to calling for the beginning of a year to "Celebrate Christ! Live the Love! among Augustana members and pastoral leadership. Give yourself permission to have a honeymoon between the congregation and the pastor. Proclaim a year of appreciation for one another. During that year suspend criticism and negativity and celebrate your legacy, your members, your staff, your future, your faith. Live the Love!
2. The SRT recommends that the council publish an authorized version of the budget controversy that resulted in the finance committee's resigning and staying away from church. There's too much false information going around and people are too willing to put the blame on the pastor when the facts seem to indicate that pastor was only asking for what was promised him. It also appears that the deeper reason for finance committee members leaving was theological issues with the ELCA that pre-date the pastor's coming to Augustana. Here is the version we were able to reconstruct from a number of conversations:
 - The call committee interviewed 3 other candidates before calling Pastor Randy, but for various reasons those candidates either didn't or couldn't accept the call or weren't offered the call.
 - The Call Committee had expected to call a less experienced (and therefore less expensive pastor). When they decided to call Pastor Randy he was concerned that his larger salary would be an issue.
 - The Call Committee assured him that it would not be. They recommended him to the council and the council recommended him to the congregation. The congregation approved the call with the salary and benefits package.

- There were mistakes made in calculating the congregation's share of Social Security, but that was straightened out.
 - When the next budget was put together by the Finance Committee they decided that the Pastor and Secretary should pay the yearly increase in their health benefits. This was not for budgetary reason, but because they believed that since other people in the community had to pay a portion of their health benefits, church employees should too.
 - The pastor reminded them that that was not what they had agreed to in his Letter of Call. The council agreed and the full amount of health benefits for the pastor was restored to the budget. Later this was approved by the congregation.
 - As a result, all the members of the Finance Committee resigned the committee in protest and haven't been attending church.
 - At an annual meeting this was characterized as the "pastor driving people from the church." A number of people applauded that sentiment. No one responded on behalf of the pastor.
 - It should be noted that the Synod already pays one half the health benefits package because Pastor Laurie Skow-Anderson is employed by the Synod. Also, noting that Pastor Randy did not wish it to be public, but since this issue has caused problems, he has agreed that the congregation can know that Pastor Randy and Pastor Laurie have increased their giving to make up the increase.
 - The Pastor and other members of the church have visited those who have departed and made attempts at reconciliation.
 - One of the group explained that the Finance Committee members and other members that have left recently didn't leave solely because of the health benefits questions. They were people who have felt for a long time that the ELCA was becoming too theologically liberal, that they were not leaving the church, the "church was leaving them."
3. The SRT recommends that the council publish an authorized version of the dismissal of the organist. From many conversations that we had, a picture emerged that was different than what we heard from council members . . . basically that the pastor and choir director butted heads. Certainly care must be taken to protect the confidentiality of those involved, but the common belief that the pastor "ran the choir director out" needs to be countered. Here is what we reconstructed from many conversations:
- The issue with the choir director goes back well before Pastor Randy was called to Augustana.
 - Choir members for some time had felt mistreated and bullied by the organist, but other pastors and council had failed to address this. The choir director and organist were in regular conflict with one another.
 - Pastor Randy followed appropriate procedures in working with the personnel committee, who met with the choir director to address the issue and offer a number of ways to remedy the situation. At each step the organist ignored or rejected the employment requirements.
 - After a number of these interventions, the decision was taken to the council who decided on a period of suspension for the organist, which led to her eventual resignation.
 - Unfortunately some of the council's discussion was published which, understandably, caused hard feelings.
 - Everything was done according to a reasonable procedure and, again, this was not a pastor vs. organist issue, but the decision of the council.
4. The SRT recommends that you establish a mutual ministry committee using the book *Pastor and People*. The committee could help establish reasonable goals for the pastor's ministry and the expectations and shared ministry of the congregation, starting with the idea that if no volunteers can be found for a ministry area, it is not automatically the pastor's responsibility to step in.
5. The SRT recommends a series of progressive dinners to generate a list of things people love and appreciate about Augustana. Only statements of gratitude would be acceptable. No negative responses will be allowed.