

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Montana Synod**

Comprehensive Ministry Review Report:

First Lutheran Church of Wolf Point, Montana

Pastor: Greg Holler-Dinsmore

Congregational ID: 13491

September 8-10, 2017

The Review Team:

The Rev. Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, Director for Evangelical Mission, Montana Synod,

John Munding--Lay Pastoral Associate from Helena, MT, member of St. John's Lutheran, Helena; (John was the facilitator of the group)

Barb Arensmeyer--Lay Pastoral Associate from Choteau, MT, member of Trinity Lutheran, Choteau

Jodie Tooley--Lay Pastoral Associate from Great Falls, MT, member of New Hope Lutheran, Great Falls

Karen Nave--Lay Pastoral Associate from Havre, MT, member of First Lutheran, Havre

Introduction of Process:

First Lutheran Church of Wolf Point invited a Montana Synod Review team to assist the congregation in completing a comprehensive ministry review. The congregation requested the review because members understand that the demographics of the congregation and community are changing. The congregation as was said, "is trying to figure out who we are and what we want to do".

The Review team drove to Wolf Point, and during the drive, the team had an opportunity to get to know one another. Upon arriving in Wolf Point, the team gathered for an orientation, then The Rev. Gregory Holler-Dinsmore, the current pastor at First Lutheran Church first gave the group a tour of the church facility and then a tour of the community.

At 4:30 p.m. the team met with three community leaders, Jeff Harada, the police chief in Wolf Point, Tori Matejovsky, employed at Great Northern Development, and Donna Reum, a volunteer with the Optimist Club.

After meeting with the community leaders, Pastor Greg and his wife, Christine served dinner to the Review team. After the group had eaten, the team interviewed Pastor Greg.

On Saturday, Sept. 9th, the team met with Lynn, the musician, Angie, the parish secretary and Grant, the custodian.

After the interviews with the staff, the ministry review team met with the Leadership team; including Shirley Zimmerman, an inactive LPA, Cheri' Nygard, the president of the

congregation, Doug Madison, Linda Twichell, Jim Albertson, Carl Traeholt, Bill Rensvold and Pastor Greg Holler-Dinsmore. (Kathy Redekopp joined the group on Sunday).

After spending about 5 hours together, reviewing the ministry and history of First Lutheran Church in Wolf Point, Pastor Greg was excused and the Ministry Review team gave instruction to the Leadership team for the SWOT exercise and to place the congregation on “the Life Cycle” graphic. The Review Team worked on preliminary affirmations and recommendations. The groups came together again to hear the reflections on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the leadership team wrote out and where they perceived themselves on the Life Cycle graphic. The teams left after a long day together. After dinner together, the Synod review team worked on affirmations and recommendations to present to the leadership team on Sunday morning.

On Sunday, the review team talked to members and Pastor Greg before the worship. During the worship, the Review team was invited to stand as they were introduced. The congregation greeted them warmly. After worship, several people gathered with the leadership team in the fellowship hall for some conversation regarding the process of the review. There was some additional sharing of thoughts and ideas from people from the congregation. The review team and leadership team met and the review team shared their affirmations and recommendations with the leadership team and Pastor Greg.

Background:

The Rev. George Karres, the former Director for Evangelical Mission had met with the Council in Wolf Point and the time for the review was agreed upon. After Rev. Karres announced his retirement, John Munding agreed to serve as the facilitator for the Ministry Review with the hope that the new Director for Evangelical Mission would be in place to also attend. The Rev. Peggy Paugh Leuzinger began in the position as Director for Evangelical Mission three days prior to the Ministry Review. The Congregation and Pastor Holler-Dinsmore completed the requested material in a timely manner and the review team had adequate time to read through the report.

The Ministry Site:

As the Ministry Review team arrived in Wolf Point, we approached a building that was prominent, a red brick two-story building. The front of the building and entrance into the fellowship area appeared to be the main entrance into the building. The sanctuary area is clearly a newer addition, set back from the sidewalk with an entrance facing the street. There are large parking lots on both ends of the building. The church building is located ten blocks north of Highway 2. The former sanctuary area is now a gym/fellowship area with a large kitchen and classrooms along the sides and around a balcony area upstairs. The entrance is at ground level, making it very accessible to the main fellowship area. The front of the building had a few panes of stained glass windows, then panes that were clear and some that were colored. Pastor Greg stated that someone who had joined the congregation a few years before had convinced the congregation to put in stained glass and had helped with a few, then left the area. Pastor Greg stated that there were several thousands of dollars of glass in storage. The Review

team agreed that upon entering the fellowship area there was a smell that was slightly unpleasant. It was not a smell that the group was able to identify. It was not noticeable in the sanctuary portion of the building.

The fellowship area appeared to be clean and tidy but as the team looked into the education rooms, there appeared to be boxes and items that gave a cluttered feel to the space. Pastor Greg shared that the congregation had done work in the sanctuary and narthex area prior to their 100th anniversary celebration in the spring, and had been working to replace some windows in the narthex to make the building more energy efficient and to bring in the outside light. There was new furniture in the narthex area also, making for a welcoming and comfortable space. Pastor Greg stated that there were plans to move the sound room (for the radio broadcast and sound system and projection system) into the back of the sanctuary and to remove the paneling in the sanctuary and narthex. The sanctuary is a progressive worship space. The Renovation Committee has been active to keep up the facility; cleaning, painting and making the building more energy efficient. Like many congregations, it was expressed that the church is more focused on “the inside” rather than “the outside.”

First Lutheran Church of Wolf Point was formed one hundred years ago, as an amalgam of several small, country churches. The Europeans who formed the early church did not evangelize among the Indian people and the congregation has a reputation of not being welcoming to Indians. The first Tribal member joined the congregation during the 1970's. Today, about 10% of the congregation members are Indian. The reality of racism toward the Native Americans is a continuing challenge, but good relationships are developing among the members of the congregation and the Native community. Originally, the congregation was located on “the other side of town”, across Highway 2, on the south side. In the 1950's, the congregation moved to their new building “up the hill”. In the 70's, the congregation built on to their building with what is now the sanctuary. It was shared more than once that the north side of town is where the rich people are, and the Lutheran church is perceived as the “rich white church on the hill.” It was generally agreed that the 1950's – 1970's was the height of the congregation. Even now, much of the membership of the congregation is white, descendants of the early settlers and farmers and other people who moved into the area through the years.

Over the years, several pastors have served First Lutheran Church. Most stayed for about 10 years. Pastor Greg and his wife Christine moved to Wolf Point where he served his internship and during that time, his wife Christine began teaching at the Tribal College. (She has a Ph.D. in Biology.) As Pastor Greg entered his first call, Christine stayed in Wolf Point. After a few years, he resigned his call and moved to Wolf Point, serving for a time in other local congregations and teaching at the Tribal College. In 2003, he was called to serve the congregation of First Lutheran as the pastor. Pastor Greg and Pastor Chris have exhibited a deep commitment to the community; Wolf Point is their home.

Over the years of his pastorate, Pastor Greg has conducted 250 funerals. The Review Team especially noted the display of “some of the Saints” of the congregation and heard from some of the leadership team about loved ones who have died. There is a grief that

the congregation seems to feel in being aware of the loss of so many people from the congregation and community.

The congregation has demonstrated a willingness to change, going back to the merger of a number of country congregations to become First Lutheran; to their willingness to move “up the hill”; and, to continue to refurbish their building. The congregation is known for having a progressive, open worship space.

Wolf Point Community:

Wolf Point is on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. In the early 1900's, the government opened up the area to homesteaders. As a result, there is both native and non-native land ownership within the Reservation boundary. The Review Team and Pastor Greg drove around to see the swimming pool and little league fields, the nursing home and what Pastor Greg described as “the rich part of town”. When we crossed Highway 2, we entered into the business district, which has gone from what was once a thriving downtown to what is now a place with several empty buildings. There is just one grocery store in town. We drove by the schools, the Indian Health Services and Tribal Center and into the area of town occupied as Tribal housing. We drove by the Catholic Church, the new construction of a large Mennonite church, the Missouri Synod, Presbyterian as well as a few other churches. We stopped to see the Spirit of Life Bike Shop where Pastor Chris Holler-Dinsmore and others work to mentor some of the Indian youth, teaching them the skill to rebuild bikes, so that when they are finished they receive a helmet and lock and a bike of their own. Pastor Greg talked about the challenges of getting people to move to Wolf Point and stay for a while – that there is a need for teachers, medical personnel, and others to maintain the infrastructure for the community. On the surface, the Wolf Point community appeared to be fairly clean and well maintained. What wasn't so evident was the poverty and all the issues related to what people described as the needs facing the community.

The town of Wolf Point currently has about 5,785 people. About 50.4% of the community is Native American. The community is projected to grow. However, the ethnicity of the community is changing. Younger white people leave the community for education and then, rather than returning, seek employment elsewhere. At the same time, younger Indian people are moving into the community. The Review Team heard conflicting reports; that most of the labor force is employed and that almost half of those older than 16-years are not in the labor force. Unemployment in the area is 68% (a figure that is not apparent from the official statistics). All with whom the Review Team spoke mentioned the significant affect of drug and alcohol abuse and all the consequences of that in the community, including the breakdown of nuclear families. The school district has difficulty retaining competent teachers. Transportation for students, especially younger students, is not adequate. There are limited opportunities for positive youth activities in the community. The Optimist Club, which includes several members of First Lutheran, is an organization, which seeks to address a number of issues facing children and youth. Unlike some communities, Wolf Point school system makes some degree of accommodation for Wednesday evening church activities.

The Review Team heard the concern from several people that the community has a need for infrastructure; especially people -- including the need for people to staff key positions in the medical community and in the schools.

Interview with Community Leaders:

First Lutheran Church is viewed by people not from the congregation as open and willing to step up and be involved in the community. Several events were mentioned that are hosted/housed in the Fellowship area of First Lutheran Church: from the after-Prom party to Blood Drive and Hunter safety class, to hosting bike riders travelling through the community each year. They spoke of the openness and appreciation for both Pastors Holler-Dinsmore and their commitment to the community. They see the presence of the Lutheran Church and the openness with which the community is welcome in the building as a sign of generosity and care. When the question was asked, if First Lutheran Church was not here, what would be missed, the community leaders agreed that the space that is made available to the community would be a huge loss for the whole town. They spoke too of the generosity of the whole community and how that is deeply appreciated. The Optimist Club was mentioned as one organization doing so much good work in the community for kids. There is an emphasis in the community in reaching out to the children and youth. There was a very positive perception of the Logos program that is held at First Lutheran Church on many Wednesdays during the school year, which intentionally welcomes children and youth who are not members of the congregation.

Each Sunday, the worship service of First Lutheran is broadcast on the local radio station, and Mon. – Fri. Pastor Greg’s morning devotion is broadcast on the radio. Many see these ministries as a powerful outreach into the community.

Interviews with First Lutheran Staff:

The Review Team met with Lynn, Angie and Grant and heard from them about their commitment to the church and to the community. Some of their thoughts are woven into the reflections below.

Reflections from the First Lutheran Church Leadership Team:

The Leadership Team and the Review Team, including Pastor Greg Holler-Dinsmore met together. There was introductions and Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, DEM for the Montana Synod led the group in reflection on several Biblical texts. John Munding, facilitator for the Review Team led the leadership team to reflect on several questions and topics.

The leadership team responded quickly to the request to tell the story of the congregation. It has been a struggle to maintain the budget, they need “more outreach”, there has been a drop in attendance at worship, many people from the congregation have died and there hasn’t been anyone to replace them. It is a vital congregation, but the building is hard to maintain. Someone said, “maybe people don’t know how to give.”

Someone reflected that the younger generation “doesn’t go to church.” As the church used to be the center of the community, it is no longer. There was agreement that the height of the congregation was in the 1970’s. But that the church was/is known as the “white man’s church” or the rich people’s church.

When the question was asked, what is God up to? A response was, “a test that we are failing.” The concern was expressed for the children, who are vulnerable to all the false prophets. There was agreement that the congregation, which was known as the Norwegian congregation, is in transition.

Parochial Report:

The membership records from the parochial report submitted to the Synod and Churchwide expression don’t reflect the reality of people involved in the congregation. Pastor Greg stated that a more realistic number would be 320, rather than the 695 listed in the parochial report. There is a stewardship program that has been led by Pastor Greg without lay involvement. Quarterly giving reports are sent out. But the income has not been meeting expenses and the Pastor’s compensated time has been reduced over the last several years. As the money counting process was raised, the Team heard about the process, that the actual money, (bills and change) are noted and the number of checks received, then the offering is deposited in the bank, then the secretary picks up the money and counts it on Tuesday mornings by herself.

It was noted that recently there have been quarterly work groups meeting after worship to complete projects and gather for a potluck. That has been going well.

Worship:

The congregation sponsors the Sunday worship on the local radio station each week. It is well received, as well as Pastor Greg’s morning devotions also broadcast on the radio. One challenge is trying to connect the radio audience to what is going in worship and the congregation. The music and sermon were both described as “great”. Three liturgies are currently used on Sundays: the “Children’s Service, ELW, setting 10, and the Ralph Sappington Light of the World. There is weekly communion. All are welcome to communion. There is a chancel band with piano. The statement was made that the organ is missed. The pianist has been involved in worship and music at First Lutheran Church since the mid 1980’s and appreciates the opportunity to serve in this capacity. Over the years there have been several choirs for children and adults but the church does not currently have a choir. There are not many musicians in the community who can step into music leadership in the congregation.

Worship, with communion, is one component of Logos, the Wednesday evening program. There is a challenge in that the Logos program participants join in worship on Wednesday evenings. Most of the participants from the congregation on the leadership team had not participated in the Logos program. The participants in Logos, including people from the community and members of First Lutheran, tend to not participate in Sunday activities and vice versa. There are few weddings and many funerals in the church.

Learning/Faith Formation:

Pastor Greg pursued the model of the Logos program a few years ago and it has become a very important part of the congregation's identity. There have been 40-60 children attending, as well as confirmation students. Spark Bible material is used in the teaching section with eight to twelve teachers involved. Pastor Greg teaches confirmation as part of the evening program. There is a meal and worship at the end. Some older teens also participate as helpers. The Logos program has enhanced the ministry of the congregation. Participants include non-member families and about half are Indians. Logos is "making faith visible" in the community and is an example of the congregation living out the new mission statement. The Logo's program speaks to the commitment of people in the congregation and community to offer positive programming for children and youth. However, one concern is the question of how to bridge the gap between those who worship on Sunday and those who are part of the Logo's program on Wednesdays. First communion preparation is completed at Logos. The parents of high school age youth are actively involved in helping to fundraise for the youth to attend the ELCA Youth Gathering. Pastor Greg is not involved in the youth activities. The Leadership team described Pastor Greg's sermons as a way in which they are equipped to be disciples. Pastor Greg offers periodic Bible studies or topical studies. There is a weekly men's breakfast. There are one-two active Circles who meet for Bible Study.

Hospitality and Fellowship:

Coffee hours following worship and the mealtime at Logos are valuable fellowship times. There was a lament that the Smorgasbord, an annual meal that the congregation sponsored for years ended a couple years ago. It had been seen as a wonderful time of fellowship for the community and for all the members who assisted. The congregation struggled to get enough volunteers so stopped serving the meal. The last few years, some of the Catholics came and helped prepare and serve the meal and the Lutherans would help them with their hamburger stand during the rodeo. The choir was another fellowship group, which no longer meets. When asked what they could do to allow for there to be more fellowship, one comment was "something with a beginning and an ending." There is a group, which meets to knit prayer shawls at the Sr. Center. Since Logos began, the Lenten services (and soup suppers) have stopped being as effective as they were moved to Thursday evenings.

Visitors/New Members:

There are often visitors who come to worship on Sundays; teachers, medical workers and others who come to the community for work. Pastor Greg sends a letter thanking visitors for coming. The question was asked if there was a difference in how people were treated depending on their race. There was a consensus that the congregation needs to do better at welcoming visitors. There was agreement that the population of the community is not reflected in the congregation. There has been a recent push to be more welcoming and to make sure to invite people to the fellowship hour, though there was an agreement that the hallway between the sanctuary and narthex and the fellowship space was daunting.

There was some discussion about the challenges and difficulties that the community lives with, including addiction and abuse and poverty. The leadership team recounted

that a major industry was located in Wolf Point several years ago, which employed both Indians and whites. There used to be several implement dealers and they have downsized. People stated that the youth and young adults from the congregation tend to leave and not return, but the Natives remain or come back.

Sharing the Good News:

The leadership team affirmed that they need help sharing the good news. They again credited the sermons that they hear as encouraging them. When asked where do they want to reach out, the answer was the Natives, especially the young Natives with families.

Social Ministry:

The leadership team knows of many ministries and outreach programs in the community, including feeding ministries, food bank, clothing drives and need for clothing for children especially. Someone stated that “the tribes need an orphanage” to care for the children. They described the cycle of poverty. The leadership team and review team brainstormed ideas... including researching what is going on in the community and creating a directory of sorts, teaming up with another church to hold Logos on the south side of town, putting in a restroom for the tree people, partnering with Pastor Christine Holler-Dinsmore’s ministry with the women at the prison, encouraging an effective Big Brothers/Big Sisters program in town.

Stewardship:

In recent years, Pastor Greg has been the Stewardship committee. Through his leadership, there has been a letter and pledge card and sermon and encouragement, but there has been little involvement by the laity.

Finances:

There is currently a deficit of about \$8,000, in the general fund, and that is after cashing in an account to balance the budget last year. The Treasurer is paid and manages the money. The Church secretary counts the money and records the offering into the computer program. The ushers count the cash and the number of checks and record that before depositing the money into the bank on Sundays. There is an offering received on Wednesdays at Logos, but it is very small. When asked if the congregation is sustainable, the leadership team’s consensus is no, as it is right now, without changes.

Pastor Greg handles the the youth account and the WELCA has an account.

Income	Expenses:	Deficit/surplus
2012: \$140,601	\$137,616	\$2,985
2013: \$126,392	\$147,928	(\$22,535)
2014: \$141,516	\$149,434	(\$7,919)
2015: \$126,429	\$144,328	(\$17,829)
2016: \$132,909	\$129,694	\$3,216

As of the end of Sept. 2017: First Lutheran has given \$8,507 to the Montana Synod for Mission Support out of their budgeted \$15,000. It is reported that there is about \$230,000 in savings/endowments, though it also appears that much of the endowment is designated for scholarships.

The Review Team noticed that the budgeted income amount in 2016 was \$191,000 and the actual income was \$132,909. The Review Team wondered why the budget amount varied so widely from the actual expenses and what the process was for setting the budget.

Governance, Administration, Leadership:

The Church Council is made up of 11 people. There are standing committees from the Church Council, including worship, evangelism and stewardship, (one committee), property, education and youth, (one committee). There was a 100th anniversary committee and there is currently a renovation committee tasked with updating the building. The Council does not receive any training and usually the meetings last about one hour.

Involvement in the Larger Church:

Pastor Greg has been a leader in the Synod as the coordinator of the LPA program and in other leadership roles. There are currently three active LPAs in the congregation who mostly fill in with pulpit supply. There are usually voting members from the congregation who attend the Synod Assembly. The congregation has given consistently to mission support to the Synod of around \$15,000.

Hopes/Fears for Next Several Years:

The leadership team expressed hope that the congregation would be faithful – keep the faith. It was mentioned that they had come this far by faith, so... there was hope for the future. It was also mentioned that they hope to be financially sustainable.

If the congregation were to close, what would be lost to this community?

The facility as a gathering place for so many activities for the community
A sense of belonging, having a church home
It would feel like the loss of a family member
It would be a loss for the children and youth of the community
The building is an asset for the community
It is the congregation where the Gospel is proclaimed in the community

SWOT ANALYSIS:

The Leadership team was asked to reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the congregation.

Strengths:

faithful people/solid core
Worship based on sound theology
Great pastor, easy to work with, great with the youth
Great facility
Room to grow
Radio outreach
Saved by grace, not works
New Mission statement: Making Faith Visible
Welcoming congregation

Logos
Safe, positive place to be
People willing to give to causes
Pastor Christine Holler-Dinsmore

Weaknesses:

Declining attendance on Sundays
Budget shortfall, less volunteers
Staff time is limited
Perception of the church
Resistance to change
Poverty in the community
Fewer children attending Sunday worship

Opportunities:

Utilize social media: email, livestream, facebook
Population of unchurched people
Open communication
Young people
Unmet social needs
Change perspective
Outreach
Marketing/Education plan

Threats:

Unwilling to change
Not able to meet commitments
Inability to accept all people
Complacency in the community
Mobile population
Aging population
Less farm population
Competition with other activities
ACLU

After sharing the SWOT, the Review team and the Leadership team shared where they thought the congregation was on the Life Cycle.

The Leadership team felt the congregation is in decline, but there is a movement toward redefinition. The Review team agreed and also placed the congregation in the same place.

After attending worship on Sunday, and joining in an open forum with the congregation following worship, the Review team presented their affirmations and recommendations to the leadership team.

Comprehensive Ministry Review Affirmations and Recommendations:

The ministry review team appreciates the candid conversation we had with the community members, congregation staff and the leadership team. Our reflections are summarized in the following affirmations of your ministry and recommendations for your consideration as you move forward.

Affirmations:

- First Lutheran Church is a positive influence in the Wolf Point community. Over and over, it became clear to the Review Team that people in the community have a deep appreciation for the ministry of First Lutheran Church and especially the way that they offer the use of their facility for the use of the community. First Lutheran Church offers the use of a welcoming, effective facility, especially the fellowship area and kitchen; the facility is handicapped accessible, usable; and as was stated, is the “go to” place in the community. The facility is offered for a very low cost or even free to many organizations who use the space.
- First Lutheran Church is reaching a good representation of the community through the Logos program with nearly ½ of the participants Indian and ½ white. Over and over, the Review Team heard how the Logos program is an important ministry to youth and families. The congregation recognizes the importance of ministry to at-risk children.
- The Radio ministry is an important outreach into the community. It is a Christian witness that is appreciated by a wide variety of people in the community.
- There is an active quilting and knitting ministry which is outreach to the members, community and beyond
- First Lutheran has a history of working with and is willing to work more with other denominations and other charitable organizations in service to the community. The Review team heard that there is a passion and desire to help the community; to respond to the needs that they see around them. There is a willingness to try new things and the congregation wants to reach out to make a difference in the community
- The Review team heard from the Leadership team a rising awareness of the racism that affects the outreach into the community. There seemed to be an openness to talk about racism, to be honest about it, and to address it.
- The congregation is a place where members feel that they belong – where they feel at home; the congregation feels like family. Pastor Greg’s ministry is positive. He is an effective preacher and leader of worship. He is a positive presence in the community.

- The Mission Statement: “Making Faith Visible” is short, concise and can be a guide for the ministry of First Lutheran Church as the congregation moves into the future. People are willing to step out and help or contribute when specific needs are identified. People have a deep concern for the church to continue to be a vital presence for the members and for the community. Although feeling challenged, the leadership is not willing to concede defeat.
- The First Lutheran Church Council provides effective leadership and works well in partnership with Pastor Greg
- Pastor Christine Holler-Dinsmore is an asset to the congregation and the community as she ministers to the Indian population through the Spirit of Life Ministry.

Recommendations:

- Develop a vision for the future – based on the Mission Statement: “Making Faith Visible”. The Review Team heard that the Mission Statement is helpful, but it also seemed that it is not integrated into the DNA of the congregation. Lay involvement and ownership of the congregation’s ministry is vital for a vital congregation. One suggestion is to use the “Congregational Vitality Survey” in the congregation and then use that as a jumping off/teaching tool to engage as much of the congregation as possible to work to change the focus on what the pastor does to what the people of the congregation do. The congregation exists for the sake of the world, not for its own sake.
- Spend time as a congregation and as individuals in prayer; praying for the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is about Jesus and about the relationship that the people of God have with Jesus who gives life and renews life. The Synod benchmark of “Deepen faith and witness” is meant for all of us in the Synod.
- Involve more people to be a part of the Logos program: For example: Have teen and adult Bible Studies on Wednesdays; have a Logos Sunday, and / or invite children from Logos to participate in worship as acolytes or through other worship participation; involve Indian members in planning the Wednesday worship. Work to bridge Logos activities on Wednesdays to Sunday morning and vice versa
- As the congregation struggles to be financially sustainable, the leadership of the congregation is urged to become more aware of and committed to stewardship of life and resources. Make use of and involve more people to be committed stewards of financial resources. The Synod and others can assist in this process, but it requires involvement not just from Pastor Greg, but from the lay people in the congregation. The encouragement is to not relegate “stewardship to a committee or task force, but incorporate it into the congregation’s life in an intentional way.

- Given that many consider that the Radio ministry is a significant outreach into the community, consider an experiment to invite radio listeners to submit prayer requests or concerns so that listeners feel like their concerns are heard. Or experiment hosting a fellowship hour/meal for the radio listeners. Then reflect, respond and build on that ministry as seems appropriate. (The Review team wondered how or if the use of other media could assist in enhancing the radio ministry. Could the web site/Facebook page be used to include lessons and prayers to enhance the radio ministry?)
- Responding to visitors, reaching out to people in the community, working to be intentionally welcoming was raised as an issue. There are many examples and suggestions available to respond to people who come to the church. Reorganize and prioritize a committee/task force to be intentional and consistent about how to respond to visitors to welcome and to integrate them into the congregation. Suggestion from the Review team: put a sign from the sanctuary side to state that the fellowship/coffee hour is through the hallway.
- Support the ministry of Sprit of Life as a ministry of First Lutheran Church. Explore opportunities to expand the congregation's involvement with the social ministry organizations in the community that address the needs of people, including the tribe, in partnership with other non-profits in the community. Consider holding a Logos on the south-side with another organization on a periodic basis.
- Involve Indian spirituality in the worship life of the congregation on a regular basis, teaching and explaining why it is important to the congregation.
- Although the Review team suggested the following recommendations during the Review process, such as ensuring that guidelines for financial controls suggested by the ELCA for the security and protection of the congregation and members, suggestion to reorganize the church committee structure: esp. Evangelism and Stewardship committees and include non-council members on the committees, suggestion to update an active membership list, and suggestion to de-clutter areas of the building; these are in the opinion of the Director for Evangelical Mission, not the priorities for the congregation at this time.

Follow-up:

The Comprehensive Ministry Review report will only be useful if the leadership of the congregation agrees to engage, wrestle with, wonder about and ultimately make changes in the way the congregation functions.

In order to address some of the issues raised, we, the members of First Lutheran Church Council and Leadership team, Pastor Greg and Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, Director for Evangelical Mission of the Montana Synod agree to the following:

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3.

4.

Submitted by:

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger

Director for Evangelical Mission

Montana Synod, ELCA

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