



## 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

### Introduction: Why this plan?

Who are we? Who do we want to be? Are we making any progress in getting there?

In the past decade, Trinity has worked toward implementation of the 2016 strategic plan. Now we're building another plan. It's easy to ask—why all this planning? Are we getting anywhere, or just wordsmithing new documents? In this section, we highlight the main emphases of the previous plan, as a reminder of where we've been and how far we've come.

The 2016 plan focused on **removing barriers to ministry**. Trinity had many strengths, particularly its fervent devotion to preaching and teaching sound doctrine in a shifting culture. However, our facilities and organizational challenges sometimes stood in the way of effective ministry. In implementing this plan, Trinity worked to ensure its physical space and worship experience were inviting.

The plan also focused on **getting the congregational core thriving**. Along with removing facilities obstacles, the plan aimed toward streamlining organizational structure and plugging members into opportunities for service. Though the 2020 pandemic raised new barriers, the congregation made many gains in its processes for involving congregants in ministry activities like small groups and welcoming visitors. Alongside these gains, it incorporated new technologies and procedures to overcome the obstacles of the pandemic.

Thanks be to God for his work through us over the past planning cycle! Yet despite these gains, we have work to do.

The 2023 plan focuses on **incorporating new members into the body** of Christ and the local body at Trinity. Though Trinity has pockets of thriving congregational community and is growing into its beautiful space and improved organizational structure, it has a "back door" problem. The connections within our thriving congregation don't extend to all who encounter Trinity, leaving some of God's children feeling unconnected—left to drift out of our fellowship.

This challenge is rooted in our difficulties with stewarding the organizational and volunteer resources at our disposal. Numerous opportunities still exist to streamline the way Trinity invests its staff and volunteer time, ensuring that duties and authorities are appropriately assigned. Many of Trinity's greatest difficulties stem from organizational inefficiencies that frustrate and burn out paid and unpaid workers, making us less effective in closing the church's "back door" than we could be. Moreover, the disruptions caused by the pandemic have exacerbated many existing problems, creating more ministry needs despite fewer engaged volunteers.

Therefore, this plan will focus on strengthening connections at *all* stages of ministry, so that each person we encounter is so **aware of** Trinity's ministry, so **connected** to its fellowship, so **nurtured in** loving relationships, and so well **disciplined** that walking out the back door becomes unthinkable.

To foster this mission, the plan will emphasize **wise stewardship** of organizational resources along with **relentless love** at all stages of ministry.

## Vision Statement: What is our destination?

We connect people to the Triune God.

## Mission Statement: How will we get there?

Empowered by the hearing and study of God's word, the whole body at Trinity **wisely and relentlessly** stewards our resources to **build awareness** of our ministry, **create connections** in fellowship, **nurture relationships** with all we encounter, and **make** spiritually **mature disciples** of all congregants, until God's work in our congregation bears fruit throughout our community.

## Motto: What's our mission in four words?

Sharing Christ, Meeting Needs

## Our Plan: What are the details?

Our plan is broken down into four sections, coinciding with our mission focus of using Trinity's ministry over the next three years to "funnel" people toward mature discipleship and away from our "back door." In light of our second priority, that of wise organizational stewardship, each section has two subsections. The first includes strategies and tactics representing substantive ministry and program goals—*what* we'll do. The second subsection in each section includes procedural and organizational goals—*how* we'll do it as wise stewards of our organizational gifts.

## Build Awareness

### What will we do to build awareness?

1. Maintain doctrinally sound teaching, preaching, and worship opportunities.
  - a. Call an associate pastor to ensure full coverage of worship opportunities.
  - b. Ensure adequate paid staffing for non-pastoral functions of the ministry to support allocation of pastoral time toward ministry of Word and Sacrament.
  - c. Provide opportunities to educate newcomers regarding the liturgy through the Bridge Service.
2. Conduct advertising and promotional campaigns in the Greater Springfield area.
  - a. Ensure adequate paid and volunteer time are available to support these campaigns.
3. Secure adequate financial and human resources to maintain functional and appealing facilities.
  - a. Continue to approve and expend funds for capital improvements to church and school properties as needed.
  - b. Consider utilizing a future capital campaign to fund staff for facilities maintenance, in addition to facilities improvement projects.
  - c. Expand the leadership base for high-level property management decisions and tasks.
4. Inventory existing outreach programming and direct resources toward a more limited set of targeted events.
  - a. Prioritize events that have demonstrated potential to meet measurable outreach goals.
  - b. Expand outreach events that demonstrate Trinity's commitment to charity and justice efforts.
5. Equip congregants to invite the unchurched within their social networks to ministry events.
  - a. Provide invitation materials to congregants for distribution prior to events.
  - b. Encourage "each one bring one" and similar efforts via announcements and short "training" sessions during Bible Study hour or just following divine services.
6. Increase visibility of Trinity in and beyond the local community through support of District and World Missions and other relief opportunities.
  - a. Showcase local charities and ministries to which current members individually contribute to cultivate opportunities for co-participation.
  - b. Continue to support mission efforts at the congregation level and communicate this support to members.

## **How will we effectively steward organizational resources as we do this?**

7. Ensure timely and adequate communication throughout the congregation regarding ministry programming.
  - a. Ensure timely communication between the church office and ministry teams regarding visitors and new members.
  - b. Communicate events within the church body via a robust and regular array of methods.
  - c. Create a communication center at the school and church to communicate upcoming events, mission projects, and service projects.
8. Establish efficient coordination on outreach events by making communication across ministry groups routine.
  - a. Establish quarterly meetings for representatives of all parish activities group leaders.
  - b. Distribute contact information for these leaders among this group and update this information regularly.
  - c. Ensure clear allocation of responsibility for event planning; document and resolve decision-making bottlenecks.
9. Create measurable goals for all outreach activities, including targeted audiences and desired results.
  - a. Review all events annually to evaluate their efficacy, and revise strategies as needed.
  - b. Distribute event planning checklist and train ministry leaders in its use.
  - c. Designate a lay leader to document areas for improvement following each event and ensure that this information is relayed to future event leaders.
10. Secure opportunities for future connection at each community outreach event.
  - a. Collect and utilize visitor contact information at all outreach events.
  - b. Train lay leadership in creative methods and tools for connection-building, including surveys and QR codes.
  - c. Facilitate introductions where appropriate via tools such as nametags and icebreaking games.

## **Create Connections**

### **What will we do to create connections?**

1. Equip congregants to welcome visitors within the worship service and continue connections with them afterwards.
  - a. Offer brief “training” and reminders about facilitating visitor welcome during Bible Study or following divine services.
  - b. Coordinate training for volunteers to work the Welcome Center before and after worship services.
  - c. Reinstate time for pew-to-pew greetings at the beginning of worship and encourage members to vary their seating habits and “share their pew.”
  - d. Develop a pathway for visitor information to be distributed to members for personalized follow-up by volunteers.
2. Develop and sustain a program for Elder outreach to inactive members.
  - a. Promote consistent reporting of worship attendance among those who are present via congregational education.
  - b. Ensure adequate technological resources exist for Elders, supported by staff, to identify inactive members.
  - c. Ensure Elders report on these efforts at Voters’ Meetings twice each year.
3. Reinstate appropriate opportunities for in-person fellowship.
  - a. Inventory existing fellowship programming to ascertain whether additional opportunities for fellowship should be created.
  - b. Encourage members to attend in-person fellowship and connect with those outside their friend groups.
  - c. Extend personal invitations to fellowship events to new members, early childhood families, and unchurched school families.
  - d. Craft written guidance for congregational leaders facilitating justice and charity events to ensure intra-congregational connections are maximized during these events as well.
4. Support new members as they enter congregational life.
  - a. Continue efforts to welcome new members via home visits by long-time members.

- b. Ensure new members receive detailed stewardship survey regarding gifts and interests, along with follow-up “plugging them in” to church life.
  - c. Institute regular six-month check-ins by lay leadership to follow up on new member experiences.
5. Provide opportunities for congregational connection to younger families.
- a. Conduct seasonal campaigns to remind and encourage parents to bring their children to Sunday School.
  - b. Develop a support team tasked with issuing personal invitations to youth for all activities/events and Bible studies.
  - c. Encourage congregants to notice and talk to the young people they encounter in congregational life.
  - d. Explore opportunities to enable young families to attend voters’ meetings and other evening functions more easily, such as remote attendance, childcare, or staggered daytime meeting calendars.

**How will we effectively steward organizational resources as we do this?**

- 6. Create measurable goals for all fellowship activities, including targeted audiences and desired results.
  - a. Review all events annually to evaluate their efficacy, and revise strategies as needed.
  - b. Distribute event planning checklist and train ministry leaders in its use.
  - c. Designate a lay leader to document areas for improvement following each event and ensure that this information is relayed to future event leaders.
- 7. Streamline avenues for congregational participation in ministry and service activities.
  - a. Emphasize fellowship and ministry programming that provides easy opportunities for volunteers to “plug in” to an existing structure.
  - b. Create a “mission drop area” at the church and school to facilitate and organize donations of goods across ministry groups.
  - c. Coordinate congregational charity efforts around themes that change at regular intervals (e.g., designated quarterly support for ministries to children, homeless, or other groups.).
  - d. Highlight an internal “program of the month” to raise congregational awareness of existing programming and volunteer opportunities.
- 8. Ensure volunteer efforts achieve maximum impact in order to steward congregants’ time effectively.
  - a. Survey congregational lay leadership with respect to specific areas, tasks, or programming about which they feel over-burdened; work to alleviate areas of burden.
  - b. Train lay leadership on norms for efficient use of in-person meetings, such as agenda-setting, minimizing off-topic conversation, and assigning follow-up tasks.

**Nurture Relationships**

**What will we do to nurture relationships?**

- 1. Streamline congregational programming that celebrates milestones and supports during challenges in the lives of the congregation.
  - a. Train and establish a Stephen Ministry coordinator to ensure cohesive congregational support for those with needs.
  - b. Work across boards and programs to document Trinity’s internal processes for handling situations of need.
- 2. Implement an outreach campaign to encourage members to reengage in in-person worship at pre-pandemic levels.
  - a. Purchase and maintain adequate technology for worship attendance tracking.
  - b. Reach out to members whose in-person attendance has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- 3. Encourage the formation of small groups to foster belonging within the church.
  - a. Ensure small group materials provide opportunities for growth and engagement on topics of interest.
  - b. Create and implement a third round of small group meetings, encouraging leaders to invite newer members or those outside their existing peer groups.
- 4. Maintain healthy relationships with peer institutions.
  - a. Support Lutheran High School during relocation via fundraising efforts, community advocacy, and flexible assistance as needs arise.

- b. Continue to strengthen bonds with other local Lutheran congregations via invitations to fellowship events, exploring seasonal altar-sharing rotations (e.g., Lenten/Advent rotations), maintaining clear lines of communication.
5. Foster a balanced and healthy relationship between Trinity Church and School.
- a. Ensure regular reporting from the School Board to the Ministry and Administration Boards, the Elders, and the Voters.
  - b. Support the School Board in its efforts to improve communication with school staff.
  - c. Study the balance of budgeted spending across the church and school in comparison to peers.
  - d. Develop and document a clearer understanding of the volume of employees' time that is dedicated toward church and school functions, respectively.

**How will we effectively steward organizational resources as we do this?**

- 6. Train congregants to use awareness and service events for nurturing relationships.
  - a. Ensure new members are explicitly aware of the importance of serving the church in developing interpersonal relationships and feelings of belonging.
  - b. Create educational opportunities to remind long-time members of the relational value of service.
- 7. Foster smooth ministry operations through improved coordination of volunteer and staff efforts.
  - a. Survey paid staff regarding areas where volunteer coordination presents challenges and opportunities in the execution of their job descriptions.
  - b. Reallocate tasks to ensure volunteers' decision-making authority does not supersede that of paid staff for execution of tasks that fall under their job description.
  - c. Ensure multiple lay leaders have access to and accountability for all significant volunteer functions in the church in order to reduce burnout and disseminate institutional knowledge.

## Make Disciples

**What will we do to make disciples?**

- 1. Encourage regular church and Bible Study attendance among all members.
  - a. Continue developing engaging worship practices while not sacrificing essential Lutheran heritage.
  - b. Educate families receiving church member tuition rates on guidelines for worship attendance through an Elder outreach campaign.
  - c. Implement a thoughtful campaign to highlight the benefits of a post-pandemic return to in-person worship.
  - d. Develop worship timing plan to increase Sunday School 'hour' and increase Bible Study attendance.
  - e. Create at least one additional opportunity for regular large-group Bible study.
- 2. Cultivate individual and family faith practices through examples and education.
  - a. Encourage small group Bible classes and extend invitations to all people.
  - b. Provide materials or conduct emphasis campaigns to encourage home devotions.
  - c. Foster robust prayer lives in the congregation through on-going prayer services and prayer-centered education.
- 3. Continue to identify the spiritual gifts within the church body and connect them to service opportunities.
  - a. Utilize tools developed to facilitate new member involvement among the broader congregation as well.

**How will we effectively steward organizational resources as we do this?**

- 4. Ensure volunteers' spiritual growth is facilitated by involvement in ministry, not inhibited by overly-demanding responsibilities.
  - a. Conduct a review of Trinity's bureaucratic structure to see where inefficiency can be reduced.
  - b. Appoint a volunteer "point person" or ombudsman (from among paid staff or lay leadership, depending on availability) to audit and report on current volunteer structure/governance.
  - c. Educate the congregation on changing organizational needs and growing professionalization of church structure in light of growing organizational size.

- d. Review the structure of financial approvals across church and school to ensure effective oversight and communication.
- 5. Expand paid church staff through a measured and intentional hiring process.
  - a. Follow guidance of the Spirit to fill existing vacancy in the Associate Pastor position.
  - b. Prioritize the development of an organization chart and staffing plan that ensures a strong foundation for future expansion by detailing the purpose, function, and ideal timing of each addition to church staff.
  - c. Emphasize adding paid coverage for staff functions pertaining to the church's day-to-day operations, facilities management, and executive operations.
  - d. Advertise employment opportunities widely and consider hiring from outside the congregation to ensure fresh perspectives on paid staff.
  - e. Remain open to creative opportunities to meet congregational needs through paid or unpaid, called or uncalled labor.
- 6. Support the development of a strategic plan specific to Trinity School but fully integrated with the Church's current plan.
  - a. Ensure this plan includes a detailed review of organizational structure and decision-making authority.
  - b. Leverage this strategic plan to study peer institutions' staff compensation levels and ensure parity.
  - c. Provide school leadership adequate release time for productive long-term planning, not merely coverage of day-to-day responsibilities.