



**TRINITY**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

# Strategy to Become More Welcoming, Connected, and Engaged

October 23, 2023

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# Team

- Chuck Reynolds – Team Lead
- Pastor Andy Behrendt
- Bruce Anderson
- Eric Bailey
- Sue Heideman-Clough
- Joe Jones
- Alan Kjelland
- Molly Reinke
- Carol Voss

# Process

Meeting Date	Description
June 15	Orientation and Describing a Vivid Picture of Our Future State
July 20	Shared Personal Experiences of Welcome, Connection and Engagement
August 10	Continued Sharing of Personal Experiences of Welcome, Connection and Engagement
September 14	Sharing of Best Practices Research on Welcome, Connection and Engagement
October 5	Strategy Discussion

# Strategy as Story

A strategy is a story that together we choose to believe. The story answers three questions:

1. Where are we?
2. Where are we going?
3. How do we get there?

# Where Are We? (A Tail of Two Churches)

## Trinity Is Fine

There is good reason to believe Trinity is doing fine. Services are well-attended, Sunday morning attendees can witness lots of kids crowd around the pastor for the children's message before heading off to Sunday school, members are generous in their giving, the Wednesday e-newsletter always seems packed with programs and events for members of all ages, the church building is in great shape and serves as a meeting place for church and community ...

## Yet All Is Not Well at Trinity

- Feedback from relatively new members was confirmed in a “secret shopper” report, which indicated that newcomers do not feel warmly welcomed at Trinity.
- Discernment team listening sessions yielded a vision statement emphasizing the need to become more welcoming, connected to God and each other, and engaged in service.
- A recent member survey revealed a general lukewarmness of feelings about the church and its sense of purpose, and about individual spiritual vitality. Further, the survey pointed to a need to foster connection/relationships among members, and to become more involved in acts of service in the community.

# Where Are We Going?

## TLC's New Vision Statement – short version

As a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Trinity rejoices in the free and undeserved gift of God's grace that we share as Christians. Liberated by faith, we fully accept and embrace each other—questions, complexities, and all. As we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world, we know we are called to:

**Welcome ALL people** who desire to know and walk with Jesus Christ in response to God's love. All are invited to take their spiritual journey with us, without reservation or prejudice.

**Connect with God and each other** in a family of faith where everyone can feel that they belong. We strive to nurture connection through worship, fellowship, and action.

**Engage in service** in our community and world. In the face of darkness and suffering, we are called to bring the healing light of Christ by working where we can have a meaningful impact.

If you are looking for a church where you feel you belong, where you can deepen your connection with God and others, and where you can engage in bringing light and healing to a dark and hurting world, you will find it here.



# Key Assumptions that Frame Our Journey

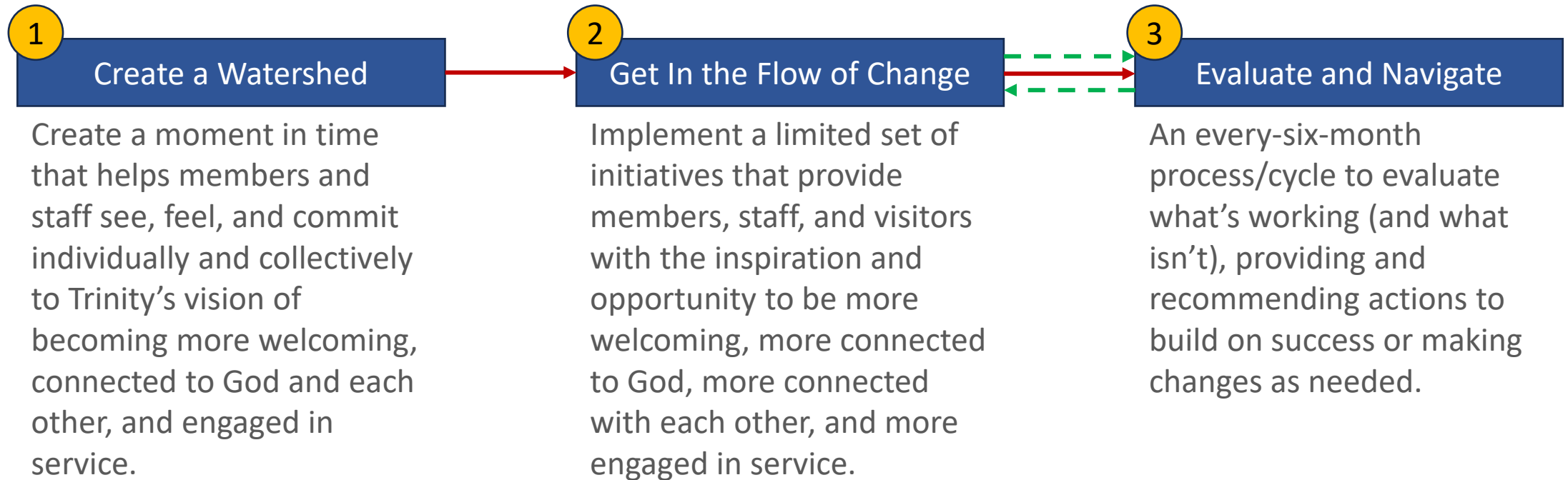
- **Success = Culture Change**, where: Culture is about shared values and the habits/patterns of “how we do things around here,” translating into the experience of being a member, visitor, or member of staff.
- **We are NOT fighting against strongly held values that oppose the vision** of becoming a more welcoming, connected (to God and each other), and engaged Body of Christ. Generally, staff and members WANT us to live into these commitments.
- **Change has begun.** Responding to the discernment process/vision statement, the member survey, and the strategic planning process, Trinity has already begun to make changes, and has planned for more changes within its 2024 budget.

# Key Assumptions (continued)

- **To change culture, we must:**
  - Help members understand and embrace the need for change.
  - Provide inspiration and opportunity to participate in change and develop new habits via new programs and ways of doing things.
  - Identify, cultivate, and support agents of change from within our membership
- **The job of the strategy is to initiate change**, to support emergent agents of change, and to monitor and adjust to extend and expand positive changes into increasingly bold initiatives and meaningful impacts.
- **Less is more.** The aim of the recommended strategy isn't to add a long list of new initiatives to an already busy calendar and burdened staff. The aim is to identify a critical few things that—if we do them well—can begin to spin a virtuous cycle of change, helping Trinity to become more welcoming, connected to God and each other, and engaged in service over time.

# How Do We Get There?

A three-phase strategy is recommended



This strategy does not have a specific time horizon. The Phase 2/3 cycle will keep it fresh. If successful, we should expect that within 24 to 36 months TLC will be at a place to step back and consider whether the time is right to update its vision, mission, and strategy.

# Create a Watershed

Create a *moment in time* that helps members and staff see, feel, and commit individually and collectively to Trinity's vision of becoming more welcoming, connected to God and each other, and engaged in service.

# Creating the Watershed - Initiatives

November 2023 through January 2024

Initiative	Notes
<b>Name Tags</b>	Name tags on which members write their name and perhaps a conversation-starting detail (e.g., favorite pizza topping) will be provided.
<b>Pew Pads</b>	Reintroduce the use of pew pads with instructions for people to provide their name and member status, and for pads to be passed back across the pew so that all members in the pew can see who is sitting with them.
<b>Temple Talks and Videos</b>	Brief (<2 min) talks or videos focused on educational topics (e.g., the benefits of name tags) or to highlight program opportunities. Strong focus of messaging on watershed initiatives. Videos can also go on social media and on website.
<b>Trinity/Lutheran Q&amp;A Cards for Visitors in Pews</b>	Produce informational “Q&A” cards that will answer visitor questions like: “What does Kyrie Eleison mean?” “Can I take communion here?” and “Are children allowed in service?”

# Creating the Watershed – Initiatives (continued)

November 2023 through January 2024

Initiative	Notes
<b>Advent Season Opportunity Fair</b>	Hold a “pop-up” opportunity fair, featuring service opportunities within the church (e.g., helping with the Miracle Tree and Giving Tree), as well as opportunities to serve with local agencies. Existing groups (e.g., women’s Bible study) will be encouraged to consider serving as a team to further build relationships.
<b>Support, Fortify, and Expand the Invite-Welcome-Connect Team</b>	Use appeals and personal invitations to increase participation on the Invite-Welcome-Connect Team so that we are prepared to welcome and connect visitors during Advent and expand the team into sub-teams in 2024.
<b>Community Art Project</b>	Members will be invited to participate in a project through which we will acknowledge and confess to not being as welcoming, connected, and engaged as we could have been in the past, and will affirm our individual and corporate commitment to our new vision. An art project will be made of the materials members use.
<b>Reveal and Highlight New Mission Statement</b>	See next few pages.

# Creating the Watershed – Initiatives (continued)

November 2023 through January 2024

Introduce and give high visibility to a new (proposed) Mission Statement that captures and reinforces our new vision.

Together in Christ, we welcome, love, and serve all people.

# The Statement Reinforces Our New Vision





# How We Can Highlight the New Mission Statement

- Replace “Call, Equip, Send” in front of sanctuary
- Speak to in sermons and temple talks
- Signage in meeting rooms and common spaces
- Featured aspect of Community Art Project
- T-shirts featuring new statement—given to all who participate in the Community Art Project to begin with
- Feature on Trinity’s new website
- Feature in Connections newsletter
- Feature in social media
- Feature on electronic sign
- Echo in proposed benedictory hymn (“The Lord Whom We Love”)

# Get in the Flow of Change

Implement a limited set of initiatives that provide members, staff, and visitors with the inspiration and opportunity to be more welcoming, more connected to God, more connected with each other, and more engaged in service.

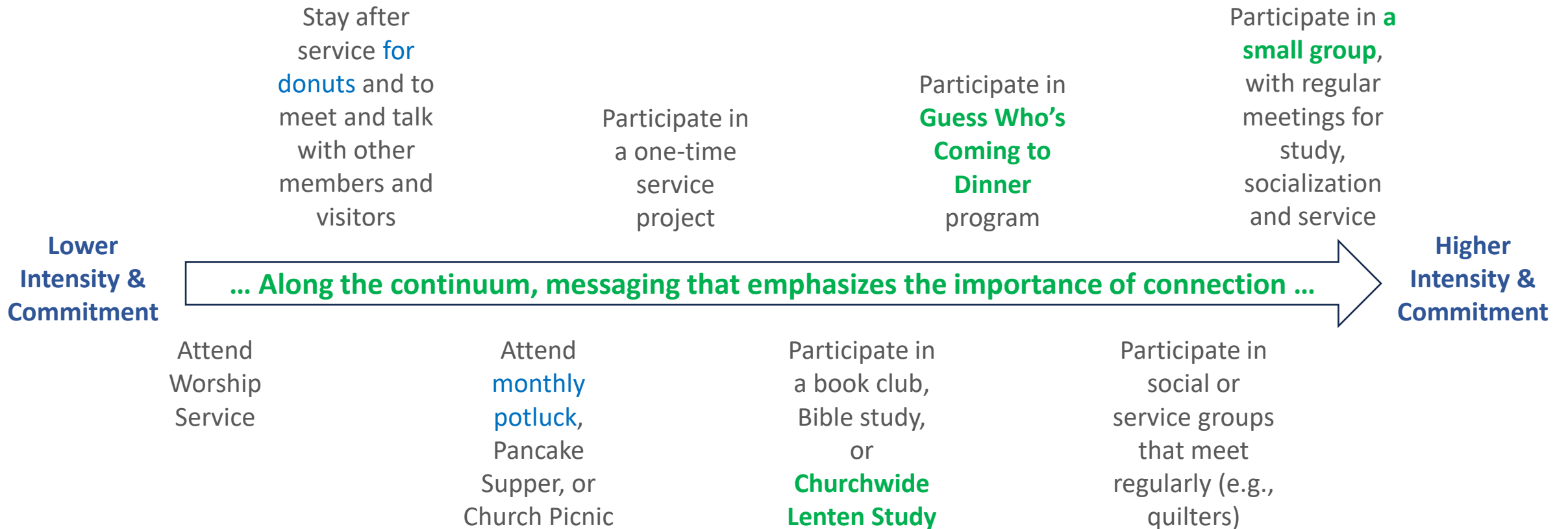
# Focus on Connecting With Each Other

While all of our vision commitments will receive attention in Phase 2, we believe the commitment in need of most urgent attention is becoming more connected with each other.

- **Connecting with each other and connecting with God:** It is in relationship with each other that we are best able to make our spiritual journey and strengthen our relationship with God over time.
- **Relationships, invitation, and participation:** Broader and deeper connection with each other is essential to enable the sort of personal outreach needed to increase member participation in programs and service opportunities within and outside the church.
- **Visitors will feel the love we have for each other:** If we are more connected to and love each other, visitors will feel it. The authenticity of it will draw people to want to be part of what we're doing.

# A Continuum of Ways to Promote Connection

There is a continuum of ways people can connect with each other, including existing programs (**gray font**), new programs already in the 2024 budget (**blue font**), and additional programs proposed via this strategy (**green font**). **Proposed programs** are described on the following pages.



# Becoming More Connected to Each Other

## Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

### **What Is Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?**

- A program that will enable members who may not know each other well or at all to get to know each other in the intimate setting of a meal served at a member's home.

### **How Does It Work?**

- Members can sign up to be dinner hosts but can also sign up only to be guests.
- Hosts work with staff to identify and invite people/couples/families to a meal (brunch, lunch, dinner). Staff involvement helps assure that new and/or less-connected members have the opportunity to become more connected.
- Guests accept but do not know who else will be attending, which is part of the fun.
- Meals are typically potluck.
- Hosts and guests share a meal and the opportunity it provides to get to know each other

### **What Need/Gap Does It Fill?**

- Hosting or attending a dinner with people you don't know is a step up (from attending events in church) in terms of relationship building.
- With staff insights and input, can introduce people likely to share interests and to build relationships.

# Becoming More Connected to Each Other

## Formation and Growth of Small Groups

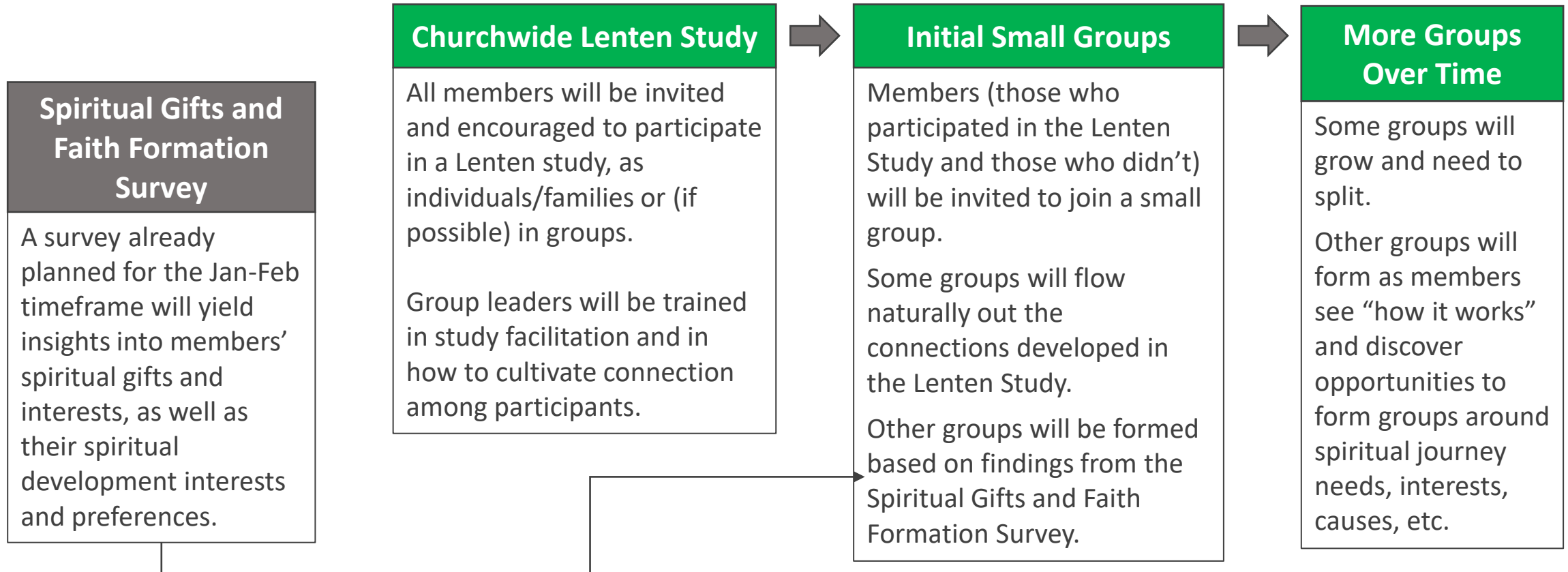
### What Are Small Groups?

- Groups of members who choose to spend time together on a regular basis (at least monthly). Gatherings typically include a mix of faith formation, socialization, and service.
- Groups can be eclectic or form around demographics (e.g., young parents, empty nesters), interests (home cooks), causes (environmental stewardship), or other attributes, such as those who have recently joined Trinity.
- If groups become too big (12 seems to be ideal), they may split to form new groups.

# Becoming More Connected to Each Other

## Formation and Growth of Small Groups (continued)

### How It Will Work / Proposed Strategy to Get Small Groups Going at Trinity



# Becoming More Connected to Each Other

## Formation and Growth of Small Groups (continued)

### **What Need/Gap Do Small Groups Fill?**

- In a congregation as large as Trinity, small groups will provide an opportunity for all members to meet and build relationships with other members.
- Particularly for people new to Trinity and/or new to town, small groups provide a way to become more connected at church and into the community. Within small groups, people can often find deep and meaningful relationships with others who have similar interests and/or who are in similar places on their faith journeys.
- Small groups tend to be engines of innovation and action, coming up with new ways to serve within and outside of church.



# Becoming More Connected to Each Other

## Communication Emphasis

- In addition to creative and inspiring messaging around the programs described above (Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Lenten Study/ Small Groups), there will be a campaign of communications regarding the overall need for building connections with each other across the congregation.
- Connection messaging will be communicated through all channels, from the pulpit and temple talks to videos and the e-newsletter.

# Becoming More Connected to God

## Items Already Mentioned

- As noted earlier, the strategy includes implementation of a **Churchwide Lenten Study**.
- Also mentioned earlier was a **Faith Formation Survey** that will be combined with the Spiritual Gifts Survey planned for January/February of 2024. Results of the survey will inform efforts to develop small groups among people with similar needs, interests, and preferences related to faith formation programming.
- If successful, the development and growth of **small groups** will provide members with many new opportunities to study the Bible and other materials and to deepen their connection to God.
- **Communications** that encourage connection will help to promote existing and any new Bible/book study groups that emerge.

# Becoming More Connected To God

## Learning Materials and Guidance

- At some point, it may make sense for Trinity to subscribe to an online service (of which there are several) that would provide access to a broad range of content resources (videos, books, discussion guides) that can be used to lead small group discussions.
- Our initial recommendation is that clergy (the new associate, Pastor Andy, Pastor Mark) provide guidance to help groups identify and select resources, and that fees to acquire materials/rights to view or print content be included in the budget (see budget implications).

# Becoming More Welcoming

## Support the Invite-Welcome-Connect Team

- The Invite-Welcome-Connect Team has a strategy and procedures in place to make sure visitors entering our church are recognized and greeted, that follow-up outreach occurs to reinforce our welcome and invite them back, and—when visitors become members—to make sure they are connected to people and programs that match their needs and interests.
- Our strategy does not add new tactics to this strategy but simply recommends that team members receive support needed to add to their ranks, to split and/or add sub-teams, and to implement new ideas or changes through the year.

# Becoming More Welcoming

## Creating a Culture of Welcome

- While we will always need at least one team focused on Welcoming and Connecting to perform vital functions and make sure visitors don't fall through the cracks, our vision commits us to developing a culture of welcome.
- Some of the tactics that will help us form welcoming habits will begin in the Phase 1 Watershed—things like wearing name tags, using pew pads, and providing “FAQ” information in the pews.
- In addition to these, our strategy calls for an ongoing campaign of communications about the importance of welcome and to teach/remind us all about how to make visitors in our midst feel seen, valued, and welcomed.

# Becoming More Engaged in Service

## Increasing Participation in Existing Opportunities

- Members of Trinity already have opportunities to serve within and outside the church.
- **As members become better connected** with each other, the deeper and broader network of relationships among members will enable more effective outreach to engage more and more members in service.
- The **Spiritual Gifts Survey** mentioned earlier will provide individuals with insights about where their passions intersect with needs inside and outside the church. Staff will be able to use results of the survey for member outreach to invite them to serve.

# Becoming More Engaged in Service

## Identifying and Promoting New Opportunities

- As noted earlier, **small groups** tend to be engines of innovation and action within churches. Many groups are not satisfied only to socialize, study, and discuss; they also want to serve. Some groups will identify service opportunities through group members. Others will look to church staff for recommendations regarding community needs and service opportunities.
- Our strategy recommends **development of a limited number of agency partner relationships**, where we work with agencies such as Foundations for Living, Head Start, the Waupaca County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and Meals on Wheels to maintain a list of needs and promote service opportunities directly to members and via small groups.

# Evaluate & Navigate

An every-six-month process/cycle to evaluate what's working (and what isn't), providing and recommending actions to build on success or making changes as needed.



# Overview

- Every 6 months – May/June and November/December timeframes
- Recommend team of about 6 to 8 representing Council, staff, and Strategy Team
- Create and use information to evaluate overall progress in becoming more welcoming, connected with God and each other, and engaged
- Develop recommendations for staff and Council consideration and action

# Evaluation Process – Types of Information

- **Pulse Survey:** Simple survey of members that will help us understand: member experience (more, less, the same?) of Welcome, Connectedness to God and each other, and Engagement.
- **Process Measures:** Track implementation of key initiatives. Are we doing what we said we would do?
- **Subjective Program Feedback:** Surveys and interviews to help us understand the experience and satisfaction of those leading and participating in key programs/initiatives.
- **Objective Program Measures:** Count of programs, groups, and participants where counting makes sense.

As part of strategy implementation, recommend a habit/expectation that each program will include an evaluation plan and will be evaluated so we can see what's working and what's not and be able to make information-based decisions.

# Evaluation Examples

Program/Initiative	Example Measures
<b>Watershed Initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Did we begin using name tags and pew pads? Did we hold an Advent opportunity fair?</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many participate in the community art project? How many people signed up for service opportunities at the Advent opportunity fair?</li></ul>
<b>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Did we implement and publicize sign-ups? Did we receive reports from hosts with pictures of their events to use in promotion of the program?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Feedback from staff, hosts, and people attending dinners – what's going well, what can be improved, ideas for improvement?</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many people signed up? How many hosted meals? How many people attended?</li></ul>
<b>Spiritual Gifts and Faith Formation Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Did we implement the survey? Did we hold debrief sessions to help people learn about and discuss their results? Did we use results to inform small group formation?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Did people who attended debrief sessions find the results and discussion helpful? Do they intend to participate in faith-formation programs if offered?</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many people participate in the survey and follow-up sessions? Do more members sign up for service opportunities or faith formation opportunities?</li></ul>

# Evaluation Examples (continued)

Program/Initiative	Example Measures
<b>Lenten Study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Did we implement and promote the study? Did we train leaders?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Feedback from leaders. Feedback from participants – overall satisfaction, perception of learning and development, interest in additional faith formation opportunities.</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many leaders? How many participants?</li></ul>
<b>Small Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Did we implement and publicize sign-ups? Did we train leaders?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Feedback from leaders. Feedback from participants – overall satisfaction, perception of learning and development.</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many small groups and people per group? How many meetings and participants attending the meetings?</li></ul>
<b>Learning Materials &amp; Guidance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Are we promoting the service of providing guidance and financial support to acquire learning materials?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Are study and small-group leaders satisfied and getting the support they need? Are program participants enjoying and learning from the materials and discussion?</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many requests fulfilled?</li></ul>

# Evaluation Examples (continued)

Program/Initiative	Example Measures
<b>Invite-Welcome-Connect Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Have we taken steps to support and increase participation on the Invite-Welcome-Connect Team(s)?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Team feedback and perspectives on processes and effectiveness. Input from new members regarding their experience of welcome and connection.</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., Statistics on visitors, follow-ups, new members, new-member connections into programs and groups.</li></ul>
<b>Agency Partnerships for Service Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Process measures:</b> e.g., Have we identified, met with, and selected agency organizations to partner with on service opportunities? Have we created systems so that we are aware of the types of service needs/opportunities available?</li><li>• <b>Subjective feedback:</b> e.g., Feedback from small group leaders and members regarding service opportunities. Agency perspectives on the efficiency and effectiveness of our partnership.</li><li>• <b>Objective measures:</b> e.g., How many agency partnerships? How many service projects? How many participants?</li></ul>

# New Initiatives Summary and Investment Requirements

What investments—including staff time, member time, communication bandwidth, and budget—will be required to implement the strategy as proposed?

# Initiatives and Investments:

## Phase 1 – Watershed

Initiative	Staff Time	Member Time*	Budget	Communications
<b>Name Tags</b>	Nominal admin.	1 to 2 volunteers before each service to set up, encourage and assist with name tags.	<\$500	Messaging in all channels.
<b>Pew Pads</b>	Nominal admin.	Ushers collect papers from pads after services.	<\$200	Transparency about the strategy (where we are, are going, how to get there).
<b>Temple Talks</b>	P. Andy – priorities & guidance. S.A. – help ID mems & coordinate.	Members develop, deliver, and record brief videos (typically using phones).	\$0	Strong appeal to all members to actively participate in all aspects of what we’re doing through this critical transition period.
<b>Q&amp;A Cards</b>	P. Andy & Lori for content and design.	Member input into content (newer member input).	<\$200	
<b>Advent Season Opportunity Fair</b>	Staff help ID internal and community service opportunities.	Members (TBD) to help identify opportunities, set up, and attend tables during fair.	\$0	

*\*Will need a planning session to identify individuals and teams to reach out to for volunteer support.*

# Initiatives and Investments:

## Phase 1 – Watershed

Initiative	Staff Time	Member Time*	Budget	Communications
<b>Support ... the Invite-Welcome-Connect Team</b>	As needed to meet needs of the team (anticipate nominal).	More members participating on the team, helping before/after worship and with follow-up.	\$<500	Same as previous page.
<b>Community Art Project</b>	P. Andy and perhaps other staff involved in conceptualization.	Project lead and team to assist with member participation. Member participation.	\$500+/-	
<b>Reveal &amp; Highlight Mission Statement</b>	All staff to determine where and how to highlight new mission.	None.	<\$200 (may include temporary vinyl sign for sanctuary)	



# Initiatives and Investments:

## Phase 2 – Get In the Flow

Initiative	Staff Time	Member Time*	Budget	Communications
<b>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner</b>	Admin staff to help track sign-ups, guide dinner groupings, and gather feedback.	A small team of 3 to 5 key members* to help promote the program and staff a sign-up table after worship for a few weeks.	\$0	Intensive, all-channel communications.  Important to use personal outreach by staff and members to encourage enrollment in all programs.
<b>Churchwide Lenten Study</b>	P. Andy and new associate pastor with admin support.	Members to help staff sign-up tables and to lead study groups.	\$1,500 (for materials)	
<b>Small Group Formation</b>	Key role for new associate. Will need admin support for coordination and tracking/evaluation.	Members to help lead small groups.	<\$2,500 (est. study material costs through 2024)	Once programs rolling, use testimonials to drive further participation.

*\*Need good mix of members to drive this program ... members representing some key demographics who have influence to encourage sign-ups.*

# Initiatives and Investments:

## Phase 2 – Get In the Flow

Initiative	Staff Time	Member Time*	Budget	Communications
<b>Learning Materials &amp; Guidance</b>	P. Mark and new associate on point to guide materials selection.	Small-group and other faith-formation leaders involved in choosing materials.	See Small Group materials budget.	Same as prior page.
<b>New Service Opportunities – Agency Partnerships</b>	S.A. to help team with agency relationships and to set up and administer processes for service opportunity tracking.	Small team of members (2 to 3) assists with identifying and vetting agencies and promoting opportunities with small groups and overall membership.		

# Initiatives and Investments: Phase 3 – Evaluate & Navigate

Initiative	Staff Time	Member Time*	Budget	Communications
<b>Data Collection</b>	Clergy (TBD) on Eval & Navigate team. Admin staff will establish and implement processes to gather subjective feedback and objective data on programs.	Members (2 Council, 2 Strategy Team) to develop members pulse survey, gather program info from admin staff, analyze by program, and develop conclusions and recommendations for Council consideration.	\$0	Communications to members about the importance of participating in the pulse survey.  Communication to congregation about program changes and additions.