

Congregational Road Maps

Overview

It is the goal of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) to inspire congregations to be truly “mission driven.” First, what does “mission” mean? If we went around the room, or asked people in your group or congregation, it is likely you would hear many different definitions. Obviously we look to scripture, and no one person is every going to understand it perfectly... because it is lived out through our congregations and our lives in ever-maturing ways as we grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. For the purpose of talking about mission—and to embrace this key element of the NALC mission statement by creating a team *Vision for Mission*—this is one definition that may be helpful: ***“Mission is sharing the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection, bringing the kingdom near, making disciples, together, following all that Jesus has commanded us.”***

In order to sharpen our focus on reaching out to others with the Good News of Jesus Christ, it’s important to take a realistic assessment of where your congregation is at the present time. For mission teams—and all ministry teams—a SPOT/SWOT analysis can be a very helpful tool. This includes identifying the *strengths/assets*, *problems/weaknesses*, and *threats* that challenge us. Did you connect with some of the issues and roadblocks the panel presenters talked about this afternoon? Are there other obstacles that face your congregation’s ability to engage successfully in Christ’s Great Commission?

This covers the S, P/W and T. But, because the power of the Holy Spirit is available to us, these can work for good and amazing *opportunities*. So, in doing a SPOT or SWOT analysis new ideas and opportunities present themselves. And for the purpose of this exercise as many opportunities as possible should be considered. Let the juices run and prune back as you get further into the visioning and action planning stage. Even though you approach the exercise from a personal or individual point of view, stay at the broad level...your focus is your congregation within the context of its immediate community, region, nation and world.

Strengths and Problems (20 minutes)

- Appoint a recorder/facilitator for the group and a presenter (they don’t have to be the same person) who will speak for the group when the large group reconvenes.
- One person agrees to be the timekeeper.
 1. Read along with the Directions.
 2. ***Quietly and alone***, each person should spend 3-4 minutes jotting down strengths and problems on notepaper. You can also jot down a threat if you like.
 3. Starting with **strengths**, the facilitator will ask everyone to contribute one idea, going around the group several times and writing responses on the flip chart. Don’t duplicate other ideas expressed, even if you had them on your list.
 4. After a list of 6-8 or so have been generated, ***cluster*** those ideas that naturally go together (in other words, are really the same strength).

5. Have the group agree on the **top three strengths** and “star” (★) them.
6. Repeat steps 1-4 for **problems**. Transfer the new categories to the larger template at your table.
7. If there is more time, for each major problem area, describe what would happen if no one took action? Write that down next to the problem.

Threats (2 minutes)

Can the group identify one or two “threats” (problems/weaknesses that will cause extreme turbulence and prevent you from moving forward)? Most “threats” are really problems. Note them on the chart.

Opportunities (15 minutes)

1. Study the lists of strengths, problems and threats. All of these can be turned into opportunities for ACTION. Be open and creative...this is NOT the final Vision element or “To Do” List.
2. Each person should take 2-3 minutes jotting down a word or phrase that describes future opportunities.
3. Then share with the group and cluster ideas. It doesn't have to be perfectly planned out yet...it needs to be prayed about and slept on, so to speak.
4. The six or so ideas that get the most mentions should be placed in the stars on the template. You can state a concept and list a couple of components/or actions under it if you like....but not all ideas lend themselves to this.

NOTE: Even though we are not ready for it yet, some people may have generated a nice list of action steps. Save these for the next steps in the visioning process.

Report Out (15 minutes)

The larger charts will be collected and posted at a place to be announced so others can view them. Next steps in this process will be provided at this time for continued work upon return home from the conference. Please agree on a scheduled meeting time to begin working on the next step and write it in your calendar. Close with prayer.

MISSION DRIVEN! SPOT/SWOT for _____ Congregation

