CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE

Congregation Name and Location

Name  Spirit of Truth Lutheran Church
Mailing address  PO Box 481, 112 E Annabelle Street
City  Brandon  State/Province  SD  Zip/Postal Code  57005
Telephone  605-582-5030  Fax
Email address  spiritoftruthlutheranchurch@gmail.com
Congregation website  http://www.spiritoftruthsd.org/
Seeking  ☒ Full-time pastor  ☐ Part-time pastor  ☐ Either full-time or part-time

Congregational President or Vice President

Name  Deanna Larson  Title  President of the Board of Deacons
Mailing address  3004 N Oak Road
City  Brandon  State/Province  SD  Zip/Postal Code  57005
Home phone  Cell phone  605-261-0582
Email address  Deanna.Larson@Avera.org

Call Committee Chair

Name  Jane Ellis
Mailing address  404 S 3rd Avenue
City  Brandon  State/Province  SD  Zip/Postal Code  57005
Home phone  605-582-8154  Cell phone  605-201-4720
Email address  kerrynjane@alliancecom.net

Congregational Demographics

Number of paid staff (full- or part-time):  Clergy 1  Lay professionals 2  Secretarial 1
Average worship attendance  121  Average Sunday school attendance  20
Indicate the type of community in which your congregation is located (is it small town, small city, suburban, large city, farming, industrial, etc.).

Brandon is a growing community of approximately 10,000 just east of Sioux Falls, SD. We have a top rated school system, a vibrant business community, beautiful parks and two golf courses. We are a farming community, with a small town feel. An unexpected variety of opportunities for entertainment and involvement are available in Brandon. Nearby Sioux Falls offers excellent health care, three universities and two technical schools, a regional airport, many sports and entertainment venues and as much dining as you could ever want.

Describe the congregation’s ethnic composition and age distribution.

We are a like-minded and close-knit Christian family. The area surrounding Brandon has a strong Swedish presence. Many of our members are descendants of this heritage. Our congregation consists of many older couples, some middle age families and a few younger families and singles. We are farmers, educators, active and retired military, professionals from all vocations and retired couples.

Does the congregation have a clear vision for mission — a clear and shared understanding of where God is leading you? If so, state it as succinctly as possible.

Our mission is in line with the core values of the NALC to remain Christ centered, Mission driven, Traditionally grounded and Congregationally focused.

What are the primary goals of your congregation?

Through congregational survey, we identified our primary goals to be to remain true to the Word of God and seek His guidance in our lives. We want to spread His love and message through strong Evangelism programs and Mission work in our community and the world. We hope to grow God’s family by reaching the needs of our community.

Describe your congregation’s worship practice (liturgy, hymns, vestments, music, hymnals, and frequency of Holy Communion).

In our worship we use portions of the liturgy from the Reclaim Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home. Most of our hymns come from there also with a few more contemporary favorites blended in. We celebrate communion on the first and third Sundays. We enjoy special music from many talented members. There is a children’s sermon weekly given by a lay person. Our worship space is contemporarily styled.

Describe your congregation’s Christian education ministry.

We offer Sunday school for 3 and up. Adult Sunday school has been before church and children’s through high school classes are after service due to space limitations. Separate women’s and men’s studies led by lay persons are held during the week. Text study, led by the pastor, occurs early on Wednesday morning. A new evening women’s group will begin in October. We employ a part time youth director who leads separate middle school and high school activities weekly. Vacation Bible School is a popular summer program each year. Other education events happen seasonally or when a member is inspired to lead.
Describe the congregation’s current activities for mission and outreach.

We have a strong mission focus. There are more than a dozen local and regional Christian programs we support with our monthly mission moneys. We have strong ties to Robin’s Nest Orphanage in Jamaica. This has been an annual mission trip (for youth and adults) as well as prayer and financial support throughout the years. A group travels to Rosebud Indian Reservation for The Feast of Nations each November and has completed other mission trips for special projects there also. Many members participate in St. Dysmas Prison Ministry at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls. The Sunday school supports Operation Christmas child through the shoebox program each year as well as various mission projects during VBS. We host an annual Live Nativity at a nearby farm with animals, carols and the baby Jesus. This has become a very popular community event in Brandon.

The NALC is committed to moving away from an institutional understanding of the Church, to the biblical commission to be a community of followers of Jesus who focus on being disciples and making disciples. Which best describes your congregation’s understanding of this movement? [Type an X by the appropriate response]

We strongly believe in the idea of being the church rather than going to church. We have not thought of this or recognized this as an official “movement”.

List the Top Five Things your congregations hopes for in its next Pastor

1. Strong pulpit messages that challenge and engage the congregation.
2. Remain true to the Bible in all things.
3. Help congregation grow their own spiritual relationship with God.
4. Encourage Bible study and Christian education for all ages.
5. Teach confirmation and Bible studies and equip others to do the same.

What were the three most significant events in your congregation’s history? Provide the years in which these events happened and why they are important to your congregation.

2012- After many discussions and a disappointing vote, the ELCA congregation to which we previously belonged was split, leaving half of us “homeless” where a building was concerned. Lifelong friends and families were torn apart. God did not waste our pain. Led by a small group we formed Spirit of Truth Lutheran Church rather than all going separate ways. We met as a church family for the first time on Mother’s day of 2012. Our name was suggested by a dear member, who is no longer with us, from John 16:13. “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

2015- After 3 years of nomadic worship, God sent us a generous benefactor and we were able to arrange for a leased space to call our church home. No more hauling church in and out of various rented and borrowed situations. More week day activities could be scheduled and enjoyed. Funerals and special events no longer required costly and hurried arrangements. Alleluia!

2018-19- We have been able to purchase our current location due to the kindness of our landlord, smart investments and generous giving. As a congregation, we gathered almost half of the total cost for down payment. This is yet another indication that God is blessing and guiding us as we continue His mission.
Has your congregation participated in the Congregational Workshop Preparatory to the Call Process?
[Type an X by the appropriate response]

_____Yes  ______No.  We have surveyed the congregation to get answers for this profile.

Describe the nature and extent of any significant current or recent conflict in the congregation. Is this conflict resolved, or ongoing?  If resolved, how was it resolved?

At one time we had to discipline a youth director.  Our pastor brought concerns to the board of deacons and addition mentoring from the pastor was decided. These mentoring sessions were kept confidential.  When no improvement was identified, parents needed to be informed. A youth team/parent meeting was held with the pastor in attendance. The employment was terminated shortly after.

To our knowledge there are not any current or unresolved conflict situations in the congregation.

How does your congregation handle conflict/tension?

The call committee put this question to the congregation because we really didn’t know how to answer. Most of the congregation referred to the formation of Spirit of Truth and our split from the ELCA as our greatest tension or conflict. The majority of the congregants expressed that we have remained in God's word and followed His guidance as we have worked through issues amongst ourselves. We have respect for each other, pray for guidance and commit issues to God.

What was the nature of the relationship between your last pastor and the congregation? Positive? Struggling? Cooperative? Tense?

We experienced a very positive relationship with our former pastor and he remains a respected friend of the congregation. Our pastor was with us when our previous congregation divided and when he could no longer serve the ELCA congregation due to his personal convictions, we called him to be our first pastor. We healed from that event together. Our pastor retired and although we are sad to see him go, we are excited for what God has instore for us with a new leader.

How did your council/congregational leaders work together with your last pastor? [Type an X by the appropriate response]

The Board of Deacons respected and expected the pastor’s counsel with all decisions with in the church. With his advice, the council voted on decisions on matters of liability. The Pastor made many of the decisions regarding worship style and format and day to day operations. The pastor was given a discretionary fund to make emergency assistance decisions on our behalf.

Is your pastor a member of council with: [Type an X by the appropriate response(s)]

_____x Voice  ______Vote
Congregational finances

Total budget for last fiscal year: $250,600.00
Benevolence to the North American Lutheran Church: $6,400 to NALC, $500 to NALC District
Other benevolence: $19,500
Total debt of the congregation: $459,000
Total savings, reserves, and endowment: $63,600

Compensation of Last Pastor

Pastor’s total compensation package was approximately $95,000. This amount included salary, housing, retirement contributions, health insurance, travel reimbursement, continuing education and vacation. This would be an item for discussion when a call is indicated.

When the Congregational Vacancy List is updated, a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) is included announcing each congregation’s ministry. If you wish, your call committee may compose that summary, realizing it may be edited/formatted as needed.

Spirit of Truth, Brandon, SD. - A growing community minutes from Sioux Falls, SD, Brandon is a great place to call home. We have an excellent school system, a growing business presence and a strong sense of community. Spirit of Truth is a young church seeking a pastor to grow with us in the world, not of the world. We would like to call a person who can engage and challenge our members as well as reach out to the people of the community.

Completed by: Jane Ellis  
Date: 10/13/2019