

SALEM TRANSITION TEAM REPORT

October 25, 2021

PURPOSE

Salem is going through a change, like we have been off and on for the nearly 100 hundred years that we have been a congregation. While seeking a new pastor, our interim pastor, Reverend Loren Anderson-Bauer, is leading our congregation through this interim period between full-time pastors. One of the first major steps he took is to assemble a transition team comprised of Salem member of different backgrounds and generations.

Responsibilities of the Transition Team were:

- Assist the interim pastor in oversight of the transition period at Salem.
- Become familiar with the dynamics and goals of the transition period.
- Meet with the interim pastor to consult regarding issues that arise during the interim period.
- Identify specific issues to be addressed and tasks to be completed during the interim period and self-evaluation process.
- Report to the council and the congregation regularly on the progress of the transition.
- Make a final report to the council and congregation.
- Advise the council as to when a Call Committee should be appointed.
- Meet with the Call Committee at their request to assist in preparing the Ministry Site Profile for the congregation.

WHO

The Transition Team was comprised of the following members:

- Carol Christenson
- Darlene Haedrich
- Lisa Forsell
- Jillian Jaros (For 3 months)
- Dave Johnson
- David Piphon
- Howard Simula
- Laurie Swor

WHAT WE DID

Beginning March 2021, the Transition Team met monthly, and sometimes bi-monthly. Our first meetings were on learning about our team job description and goals, followed by discussion on how to achieve them. We decided that in calling a new pastor it was important to do a self-evaluation to pinpoint Salem's strengths and weaknesses and it was also important to get input from the whole body of Salem's members. With this information, we could pinpoint top priorities and goals that Salem members felt was most important in keeping with our mission.

To get as much input from our members as possible we decided to do a survey by person-either by calling, in-person or Zoom, text, or e-mail. We did not want to do a mail-in questionnaire, which historically gets little response. Each team member was appointed a list of members to survey in whichever manner they chose. Answers were collected in a spreadsheet.

We didn't want to catch people off-guard with our phone calls and other contacts, and to ensure good responses, we preceded our survey with a letter that detailed what we were about to do.

Below is the list of questions we posed:

1. How do you see Salem fulfilling our mission statement?

Our Mission is to pass on the faith by involving all members of our community in Christ's ministry.

2. Can we do God's work more effectively both in our church and in our community?

3. What keeps you connected to and excited about Salem?

4. Follow-up: Is there something you would like to become involved in? Something new?

5. What are some of the challenges that Salem faces in remaining a viable church in the future?

We began the surveys in mid-June and ended in early August. Letters and surveys were sent to those members that, for whatever reason, we could not make contact. We can say, with confidence and to the best of our ability, that every member was given the chance to respond to the survey.

KEY THEMES

In reviewing the responses from our members, key recurring themes emerged. They are listed below.

- Number one is that we are a mission church with many ways we help those in need.
- Improved communications to engage members in church and mission opportunities.
- There is a concern about our decreasing membership.
- Many people would like to see more families with children in our membership.
- There are also financial concerns for Salem's future.
- Salem is a welcoming church where many people consider Salem "family".
- We have strong lay leadership but could use more.

The SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Based on the responses received from our members, we completed a SWOT analysis that shows our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

This is what we focused on for each category:

- Strengths:
 - What do we do well?
 - What unique resources can we draw on?
 - What do others think we do well?
- Weaknesses
 - What could we improve?
 - Where do we have few resources?
- Opportunities (External)
 - How can we leverage our strengths?
 - What trends can we take advantage of?
- Threats (External)
 - Obstacles
 - Harmful to achieving goals

Below is our final SWOT analysis. The bullets in each quadrant are in no order. This table shows what we do well, addresses what we are lacking, and shows ways to take advantage of chances for success.

SWOT Analysis

FAVORABLE

INTERNAL

Strengths

- We take good care of our community; We are a Mission-centered church:
 - Annual Servant Trip, Prayer Shawl, Prison Ministry, CHUM, Second Harvest, Quilters, etc.
- We have a long history as a congregation, almost 100 years
- People, relationships keep people connected to Salem; we are a caring family:
 - Prayer chain, lay communion visitation team, Sunday School Care Packages
- Members are open to change
- We are a welcoming congregation
- We have so many talented members
- We have learned to use technology to reach those unable to come to church (we are adaptable)
- With a new pastor, we can create a new path for our future.

UNFAVORABLE

INTERNAL

Weaknesses

- We haven't let go of "past personal wrongs"; lack of appreciation; too much focus on the past
- We could do better communicating what we are doing internally and externally
- People want to be asked to participate or volunteer but how do we know they want to be involved
- Spiritual gifts form – never followed up on
- We do not have a diverse congregation – IE: Age, Race, LGBTQ, etc.
- Congregational membership is shrinking
- We have lost members in the due to Covid, deaths, and more.
- People feel disconnected – that they are not called, visited, given outreach
- Older generation isn't as tech-savvy
- We have one worship service, which may be too early for some
- We get hung up on "Style" of service – we need to move to more Christ-centered, relationships with God.

FAVORABLE

EXTERNAL

Opportunity

- Engage our members to get excited about more community-related activities
 - a. We have so many more opportunities to expand our outreach ministries
- Reach out to young families who have daycare at Salem
- Hermantown is a growing community (new development at Engwall's & new bike trail)
- Engage with new families moving into the Hermantown/Piedmont neighborhoods
- Identify schools, other non-profits or businesses to partner with
- Public relations

UNFAVORABLE

EXTERNAL

Threats

- Navigating and coming out of Covid pandemic
- Secular schedules conflict with and impact church activities.
- Online services, online meetings, and technology advances are impacting in-person attendance and engagement.
- Consumerism, people wanting to be entertained, church-hopping, lack of attention span, snippets
- Less "Christian" affiliation, people are not belonging to or attending faith-based organizations.
- Extremist views are prevalent in news media

THE TOP 5 MINISTRY TASKS

Using the list provided in the Ministry Site Profile, and based on our conversations with our members, we identified Salem's top 5 priorities. These tasks should be the strengths and/or priorities of our incoming pastor.

They are, in no particular order:

- Evangelism/Mission
- Pastoral Care/Visitation
- Preaching/Worship
- Strategic Mission Planning
- Youth and Family Ministry

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Transition Team worked with integrity and grace to provide an intimate and exhaustive report of the feelings and hopes of our congregation. It is our wish that this information will be useful to the call committee when searching for our new pastor. Our next pastor should inspire by preaching what the Bible means for us today and have the energy to address Salem's key themes and ministry priorities. May God continue to guide us in this transition phase.

- Respectfully submitted by the Salem Transition Team