

## Prayer Triad 1 Summary

### **Question 1: Do you think that our congregation has a clear passionate sense of who we are?**

As a congregation we have different opinions about who we are. The prayer triads all had differing answers, so there appears to be no clear sense of who we are and where we are going.

### **Question 2: Do we know what we believe and highly value?**

The main theme throughout answers provided by the triads indicates that we as a church believe in God the Father and that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. We believe in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We also believe in sharing these beliefs with others. We need to be especially thankful for God's gifts. The triads went into a variety of things we value including knowledge, well-educated ministers, receiving communion, baptism and a direct relationship through prayer with God.

### **Question 3: Do we know where we are headed?**

We don't think the church as a congregation knows where we are headed, but we know that with God's help we will get there. Individually we may know where we are headed, but we need more definition as a group – a congregation.

### **Question 4: And how are we going to get there?**

Go to church expecting to meet God and focus on Him. Be more active in inviting newcomers and others to church. Emphasize reading the Bible and studying it for all members. Get back to having a vibrant Sunday School by requesting that church leaders (elders and deacons) and others attend. Ministering to others and our outreach ministry will also play a very important role in where we are headed in the future along with being more loving, encouraging and supporting of members; paying more attention to shut-ins and members who are sick; making sure to welcome visitors and having more member participation and attendance in service.

## Prayer Triad 2 Summary

### **Question 1: Do we have clear, open, healthy communication channels in our congregation?**

There is always room for improvement. Everyone should be included in decisions when their committee or group is involved in something. We could communicate better within the congregation regarding the needs of the members.

### **Question 2: Do we know how to disagree without being disagreeable in ways that destroy our relationships?**

This kind of thing always needs to be worked on. We certainly realize how important it is to respectfully disagree with different opinions. Hopefully we will strive to respect others and their differing opinions; however, some people are more sensitive than others and we need to try to be aware about the feelings of others at all times. In a disagreement, both sides need to find a point of commonality rather than dwell on the points of separation. Agree to disagree.

### **Question 3: What can we do to foster a better sense of belonging to each other?**

Spending time together creates feelings of belonging. Continuing the prayer triads would be a good way to foster a sense of belonging – we interact with people we might not get to on a regular basis and find out more about each other through the triad groups. We feel that church participation is key in fostering a sense of belonging. Getting to know other members by participating in group activities like circles and fifth Sunday lunches could help with this mission.

### **Question 4: Do we have too much or not enough emphasis on ministering to people who are members of our congregation?**

We can never have too much emphasis on ministering to people. Unless we put a strong emphasis on ministering to our own people, we won't be able to minister to others. Elders and Deacons could do more to minister and not leave it all to the preacher. It shouldn't be a specific person's job to minister, but everyone's responsibility to contact others and make them feel like a part of the church family.

## Prayer Triad 3 Summary

### **Question 1: As a church, what are the common values that we share; ministries and programs we think are really important?**

The values we share are the love of God and our church, the knowledge that Christ is the son of the Living God and is our Lord and Savior and supporting those who are less fortunate. We also value being able to take communion every Sunday and spreading the Gospel. We think each ministry is important. Some of the important ministries that we do are Sunday School, meals, cards, outreach, scholarships, CWF/CMF, Fishes & Loaves, Hurricane Disaster Relief, communion to shut-ins, music program, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday lunches, Camp Caroline, helping families with needs in the community, Hope Clinic, Habitat for Humanity, Bible study, giving school supplies to children, foreign missions, Week of Compassion, boxes to the military, Operation Christmas Child, the Bread Ministry, Backpack Buddies and a program similar to the prayer triads that allows people to get to know others and talk about things that are important to the church.

- Note: In future the “prayer triad” groups could discuss questions related to each of the specific ministries to find out what ministries the congregation thinks are and are not working.

### **Question 2: What are two or three things we are really good at doing?**

We are good at giving - outreach to the community and outreach to each other. We have a good worship service and music program. We're good at fundraising.

### **Question 3: What distinguishes us from any other club or organization that might be doing good things?**

We believe that God is the foundation and we try to do works in the name of the Lord and in the name of love.

### **Question 4: Do we have enough emphasis on ministering to people outside of our congregation?**

We minister to those outside of our congregation and we do emphasize it, but we could always do more to help others.

### **Question 5: What new ministries to those outside the church might we do?**

Have a disaster relief program in place so we could help people who lose their homes, clothes, food or other necessary items to flood, fire or other natural disaster – we could have packets ready to take to them of things they might need. Potential other ministries include a community garden, visiting people in nursing homes, finding ways to minister to those in prison, a witnessing program and a mentoring program (like the Shepherding program that was in place previously). We need to find ways to reach out to and get to know the members of our surrounding community – maybe with a community prayer ministry. Maybe we could have a community youth center that all of the area churches could help sponsor. We could possibly start other community church projects that involve all of the area churches as well.

## Prayer Triad 4 Summary

### **Question 1: Describe our community and the context in which our community is located.**

We are a rural, small, median to low income, southern, diverse community. The population of the county is mainly Christian, but is divided into multiple denominations – Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Disciples of Christ, etc... Our community is fairly insular and is primarily conservative. A large percentage of the population is retirement age.

### **Question 2: Do you think our ministries and programs are compatible with the needs and character of our community?**

We have some ministries that are compatible to the needs of the community, but we could always have more. We need to find out what the community truly needs before we can adjust or add to our ministries to fit them better.

### **Question 3: What do we do now that you think is really good and helpful for those outside of our congregation?**

The many outreach programs. Fishes and Loaves, Christmas families, Hurricane and other disaster relief, Camp Caroline, card ministry and Swap shops. The Gospel group has added an avenue for young families to bring children to participate in a different format of worship. However, none of these are really done with the intention of bringing new members into the church.

#### **Question 4: Can you think of new ministries needed to reach people outside our church?**

Help to sponsor Special Needs Children's Activities, have respite care, start Bible study and special classes with different interest topics during the evenings. The CMF could offer a home work task group (Bethany's Handy Men) or start a church garden. We could invite the public to the church during events such as the watermelon social and Sundae Sunday. We could start Children's Fun Day, Movie Night for Children and/or a Mother's Day Out where mothers could leave their children at the church for a few hours (like 9 – 12) one morning a week. The family game night could be open to the community and we could advertise all of our activities as open to the community.

### **Prayer Triad 5 Summary**

#### **Question 1: Do the members of our church have a good sense that they each have gifts to share with the church?**

There are so many talented people in the church. A lot of our members serve often and willingly in the choir, the bell choir, etc... We think members have a good sense that they each have gifts to share. However, we think there are people who don't feel comfortable using them or who know how/when to use them. No gift is too small. Perhaps if we, the members of the church, were together more on casual terms, then we would better understand each others' gifts. Small groups might provide opportunities to learn this.

#### **Question 2: What do you think we can do to get a greater participation of our members in the life and work of the church?**

Ask – do not wait for members to volunteer. Contributions are not always monetary. Time and service is very valuable. Encourage – give thanks and praise to members for doing things. We could do more small group things, not be critical of others' attempts at helping and ministry, be tough when criticized and not let it dissuade us from participating and accept offers of help from people and let them participate in a manner that is comfortable to them. We could put time limits on some of the positions like Sunday School teachers. Also, we could have more things going on that would interest others: free breakfast, blood drive, Bible studies, adult plays, dinner theater, progressive dinners, dinner for eight, another service like on Sunday evening or a weeknight are some examples. Use task oriented structure rather than committee structure to get more people involved. Find projects that people can share and complete together. We could possibly change the worship service (time/locations/number of services/order/music) to interest visitors/newcomers/members.

#### **Question 3: How important do you think worship attendance is?**

Worship attendance is very important for personal and spiritual growth and to support the Body of Christ – the Spirit must feed the spirit. There may be a message one Sunday that reaches out to you. To grow as a congregation, we need to stay aware and informed of activities and other members – if you miss worship, it's hard to keep up with the concerns of the church family and the community. It is good to be among other believers to keep from feeling isolated. It gives peace and strength to face another week. You find encouragement from others when you attend worship. Worship should be contagious. We do, however, need to remember that worship should not just be about what you, personally, can get out of it, but about what you can give back to God.

#### **Question 4: What is one thing we all can do that would make a big difference in the effectiveness of our congregation's ability to reach others?**

Communicate with each other. Invite people with whom we come in contact to church. Follow up with visitors. We think that the "One call now" and other forms of communication within the church should be used more often. Prayer requests should go out to the entire congregation. Have more reminders of regular church events. Have more greeters to welcome people when they come in. Open the front doors of the church before worship begins to encourage people to come inside. We need to get our own members to participate – until we have participation and cohesion in our own congregation, we won't be able to reach people outside of it.

### **Prayer Triad 6 Summary**

#### **Question 1: Do we have in place the teams, committees, boards and leadership we need to empower the future direction of the church?**

Committees are in place, but are not necessarily functioning. Some have become stagnant and need new input. The committees need to be critiqued and revamped to find out what the committees' true purposes are. Our organization structure may also need to be realigned to take advantage of individual talents and desires. One way we could do it is to determine how to move from a traditional, formal committee structure to a non-traditional task or project oriented structure

in which needs are identified as tasks or projects and are designed to solve the problem or accomplish the objective, using people who have the skills or knowledge required for that one task or project.

**Question 2: Is decision making open and responsive to congregational input?**

No, we don't think the congregation has much, if any, impact. Decision makers tend to think that everyone in the congregation will know what they are doing and so do not communicate to the congregation as a whole. On the other hand, if there were more participation in church life by members of the congregation, they would be more aware of issues and decisions to be made in the life of the church and could participate in decisions. A structural change as suggested in question one could potentially take care of the perception that the congregation has no input.

**Question 3: Are the administrative structures we have in place efficient and relevant or inefficient and outdated?**

See answer to Question 1.

**Question 4: Do our teams, committees, boards and leadership have a readiness for transition and change?**

People are willing to go through this process which indicates an interest in and a willingness to change. Some of our leaders, however, seem reluctant to commit to change. Many want the benefits that change could bring but are afraid of the actual changes. More than not, a transition to a change depends on what is being asked to change. We would, for example, be hard-pressed to change some of the church's traditions.

## Prayer Triad 7 Summary

**Question 1: What do you think is the most important thing a pastor does?**

One important thing that a pastor does is to help provide spiritual leadership for the congregation. The most important thing a pastor does, however, is to constantly, in as many ways as possible, keep the congregation focused on what God wants us to do as a church – to love one another, to live our lives as Christians and to communicate God's message of love and salvation through Jesus to everyone, especially to those who do not know Jesus. Along with that, the minister needs to preach and teach the foundation of our faith, the Bible.

**Question 2: What do you think is the least important thing a pastor does?**

Administrative duties – while they are important to the work of the church, others in the congregation can perform most of the administrative work, leaving the minister to concentrate on the most important pastoral duties.

**Question 3: What are the gifts or qualities you would look for in a pastor to lead our congregation into the future?**

He or she should have a personal relationship with Christ. He or she should be compassionate and encouraging to others and should have a good character. He or she should recognize members' gifts and be able to relate to the varying age groups. He or she must be a visionary to lead the church where it needs to go. He or she should be a person who is a good listener, trustworthy, unafraid to try new things, a true Bible scholar, a sincere and caring person with concern for the congregation and the community. He or she should also have the ability to preach eloquently, but in a way that everyone can understand.

**Question 4: Describe the person you think should be the next pastor of our congregation.**

See the answer to question 3.

## Prayer Triad 8 Summary

**Question 1: Can you name at least seven people in our congregation who are passionately committed to helping our congregation reach its full kingdom potential?**

Yes. (Examples are included in some triad answers) We think there are very few people in our congregation who are not passionate.

**Question 2: How important is it for the church to have enthusiastic members and supporters of what we believe God is calling us to do? How would you rank our enthusiasm on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)?**

Very important – Probably between a 6 or 7. We need to have more than just enthusiasm, however, to help with furthering our congregation to reach its kingdom potential.

**Question 3: Do you think we can be successful without committed, passionate people?**

Duh, of course not – it is imperative that we have committed and passionate people to lead and show the way with positive energy. But how do you define success? Is it a small membership of members who love their church and experience and care about their fellow congregational members and the community at large? Or is a successful church a church that extends its hand out to the new generation by trying things that might interest a young group of people? \*This definition is something we must determine in the future story.\*

**Question 4: What really excites you about your church?**

The outreach programs, children's programs, new programs (backpack buddies/community garden), Sunday School, the prayer triads and our music ministry.

## Prayer Triad 9 Summary

**Question 1: Why do you think our church is not growing in numbers of people?**

Part of the reason is demographics – we're a small county and families who grew up here were committed to certain churches in the area from way back – but part is our lack of drive in accomplishing God's mission for the church – we don't go out and passionately recruit new members. To draw new families, teens, young parents and everyone, offer classes on various subjects, bring in guest speakers and invite guest choirs. Our goals are spiritual growth and knowledge, so a revival event and Bible studies could be offered. However, we shouldn't be hung up on numbers – God doesn't care which church brings people to him and, if we tell people about Jesus, we shouldn't care what church they go to, just that they become Christians and go to church.

**Question 2: Do we spend more time “making disciples” or “feeding the disciples we have?”**

Probably “feeding the disciples.” Adding membership has not been a real priority in the past. We are frustrated about not knowing how to “make disciples” and we don't know that many in the congregation would feel comfortable making disciples. However, we don't really do enough of either. We must first concentrate on feeding our own people so that they become a team to bring others to Christ. Then we need a team in place to accomplish the mission and we must remind ourselves every week why we are here.

**Question 3: What do you think would be the best way to reach people who are un-churched or who have never been Christian?**

Invite anyone and everyone to share in the spiritual experience you have found at Bethany. Have members who have been trained to visit and reach out to others in the community – we need that personal contact in order to start relationships with potential new members. Have a Sunday School promotion to improve attendance. We could train visitation teams and have prayer vigils. We could develop programs targeted to those people that will be held on days other than Sunday, develop summer programs for youth or develop a greeting program that would maximize the opportunity to tell others about Christ. We must realize that the whole congregation must work together to greet people and make them want to belong to our church family. This means that we must develop a way in which we can effectively greet and get to know visitors to our church beyond just having a greeter at the door.

**Question 4: Do you sense that our congregation is open and receptive of new people?**

Yes, to a point, but we need more emphasis on welcoming people. We must use a team effort to bring people outside the church to Bethany and make them a part of God's church family. We could have more follow-up on those who visit church. Possibly a committee could visit those people or we could send cards to people who visit on Sunday morning.

## Prayer Triad 10 Summary

### **Question 1: Does our building serve or inhibit the ministries of our congregation?**

Our building serves us beautifully! How fortunate we are to have it! We are able to have groups meet here that might not have done so before and the fact that outside groups ask to use our facilities means that others deem the building to be worthy.

### **Question 2: Do we have sufficient available financial resources to do the ministries that God is calling us to do?**

It seems that, whatever the need, we find a way to produce the financial resources. We have resources, but we could do more if we had more.

### **Question 3: If we were to add some new ministry, what would you want it to be?**

Youth minister; community soup kitchen and community garden; help for alcohol abuse victims, troubled teens, abused women and men, etc...; prayer ministry and classes for faith worship and how to pray; mission trips within the US; helping the homeless or families who are in trouble after some kind of disaster; service/mission projects for youth/adults; dynamic guest speakers; Bible studies; programs to attract the Hispanic population; a social media ministry and using the church van to take people in the church and in the community to doctor's appointments.

### **Question 4: If you believe God is calling us to spend our resources and use our buildings in some new way, will you publicly support it?**

YES - If God is calling us, who could not help but support it! We could have musical guests playing in the pavilion like the Pamlico Chorale or other musical groups and we could have bell choir, choir and gospel choir concerts there too.