



Strategic Planning at Good Shepherd

by: **Carla Maley**

Earlier this summer, Good Shepherd invited the congregation to share their thoughts about who we are, where we are going, and how God may be calling us to grow. Nearly 300 people responded, including long-time members, regular participants, and even some of our youth. In August, members of the Strategy Team, Council, our pastors, and others gathered for a Saturday visioning session with Pastor Nathan Swenson-Reinhold and Pastor Mike Rinehart. The time together gave us an opportunity to clarify Good Shepherd's mission, vision, and values and begin talking about what comes next in the strategic planning process.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share. Your words reflect the care and love you have for Good Shepherd. The Strategy Team has been reading every response, listening not only to the themes that emerged, but also to the personal stories and reflections behind them. While there is still more work to be done and conversations to be had, we wanted to share with you

Four main ideas rose to the surface that we will use as a foundation for the work ahead.

A Welcoming Church

The word most often used to describe Good Shepherd was "welcoming." Followed closely were "open," "accepting," "all are welcome," and "come as you are". What a

gift it is to hear that people experience Good Shepherd as a place where they can come as they are, find a home, and grow in faith. We hope this spirit of welcome continues to draw us deeper into following Christ, growing together, and sharing God's love with one another and our greater community.

A Church That Serves

Service and outreach were another important theme in the responses. More than four out of ten individuals said they would like to see Good Shepherd place a greater emphasis on serving people in need in the years ahead. Others described this part of who we are by saying Good Shepherd is the "hands and feet of Jesus."

At the same time, some responses encouraged us to thoughtfully consider where we can have the greatest impact, recognizing that our time, energy, and financial resources are not unlimited.

Our Youth and Young Families Are Essential

Children, youth, and young families are vital to Good Shepherd's future. There was a common desire to help young people grow in faith, build friendships, and feel truly at home in our church family.

Many also hoped Good Shepherd would continue creating ways for parents, young adults, longtime members, homebound members, and people of all generations to worship, serve, and share their gifts together. We heard a clear call to help everyone find a place and a part in the life of Good Shepherd.

A Place to Call Home

Some of the most touching responses described Good Shepherd as home. One person called Good Shepherd "a safe place for people to explore their faith and build deep community." Another described the church as a lighthouse on the hill, "a light in the darkness."

What our team heard clearly was that Good Shepherd is more than a place we gather on Sunday. It is a community where people find connections and a place to belong.

Looking Ahead Together

When asked what God may be calling Good Shepherd to become, a common statement the Team read was, "keep doing what we are already doing."

There is something beautiful in that answer. It reminds us that this planning process is not about starting over or fixing something that is broken. We have a strong foundation and a congregation that cares deeply about this church and its ministries.

At the same time, we have an opportunity to discover how we can deepen our impact and respond to where God is calling us next.

The work continues, and we will provide updates along the way. For now, we are grateful for the gift of hearing one another and for the many ways God is already at work among us.



A Small Group – Serving together for LifeWise StL Beauty & Wellness - Belleza y Bienestar

By: Melissa Huse

Our small group, **ENLiven** has been an integral part of our life together at Good Shepherd. Through our small group we grow spiritually, connect deeply, and serve together. One of our favorite ministries to serve is **LifeWise StL**. In September, we did one of their “Service to Go” projects.

Many Spanish-speaking adults can face barriers to wellness resources, social connection, and opportunities for self-expression. Community-based programs that foster belonging, confidence, and supportive relationships have been shown to promote emotional well-being and empowerment. The cohort will use beauty, self-care, personal style, and wellness activities as tools to facilitate meaningful conversations about identity, confidence, self-expression and social connection.

LifeWise STL is offering a 10-week Spanish, community-based program designed to create a supportive environment where participants can build confidence, develop practical wellness skills, and connect with others in their communities. Through hands-on activities and interactive discussions, participants will explore topics such as self-care, personal style, emotional wellness, body image, and self-expression.

Our **ENliven small group** was able to quickly and easily compile the needed items for the above program by shopping at Five Below, Ulta, Walgreens, WalMart, etc. Kits included items such as a makeup mirror, cosmetics and facial supplies, and journal/pen. An assembly line of items was an easy way to put the kits together. We

chose simple totes, but shopping bags would also work. We then prayed for LifeWise STL and enjoyed a meal and fellowship. Easy and Fun! In fact, LifeWise StL is one of our group's favorite places to go for service events. We have gone on Saturday mornings to do anything from watering outside planters to deep cleaning the preschool rooms to help keep their little ones and staff healthier. We've also collected bodega supplies and fresh food items for their shops. I strongly encourage any small group to consider LifeWise STL for their next service event. This is a very special place, and we're proud to partner with them!



Stephen Ministry

By: Robin Spence

Most of us have seen signs that Good Shepherd has a Stephen Ministry group – Members with Blue Nametags, Announcements in the bulletin or Friday Email. But what is Stephen Ministry?



Stephen Ministry is a Christ-Centered program made up of lay people called Stephen Ministers who have been extensively trained to provide Christian care to individuals in our congregation and community who are experiencing difficult times in their lives. While our pastors continue to provide pastoral care, our Stephen Ministers multiply caring ministry by extending ongoing, one-to-one care for more people in need—both members and non-members. The names of those who receive care and their circumstances are kept private and confidential. Even other Stephen Ministers are unaware of those receiving care by their fellow Stephen Ministers.

We all experience challenges in life and times when we could benefit from the support of a caring Christian friend. Stephen Ministers are ready to help when crises or difficulties strike such as these:

Loss of a loved one | Major Medical Crisis | Divorce or separation | Chronic Care Situation | Spiritual crisis | Unemployment or job crisis | Incarceration | Birth, adoption, miscarriage, or infertility | Empty Nest or Relocation | Recovery after an accident or disaster | Difficult family situations (e.g. a loved one with an addiction or mental health issue) | and many more.

If you could benefit from having a Stephen Minister walk with you as you deal with a personal difficulty or know someone who could, contact Pastor Varinia at vespinosa@gslcelca.org or Jan Thompson at janthompson56@gmail.com.



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