

A Modified SWOT Analysis – Bethany Lutheran Church – April 2011

Strengths:

Bethany embodies many areas of strength. These include multiple, rich blessings and resources, as they are evident in the **talents and gifts of its leadership (pastors, staff and lay)**, its **materials and finances**, its **facility** and the **associated prominent community profile**. Bethany is perceived to have strengths in its **Lutheran theology, its worship (adaptive and varied with Lutheran identity)**, its **ministries and its programming (youth and family, faith formation, ministry to younger members)**. Bethany is also viewed as **strong in its focus on the Bible, its hospitality, its size and its history**.

Obstacles or Weaknesses:

Like many Lutheran churches, Bethany has a strong **northern European look and feel**. The strong **traditions that are strengths (Lutheran liturgy, distinct worship style and identity) may also be obstacles**. The liturgy is a strength, but may also be confusing to a newcomer. Northern European mind sets may predispose us to being cool to the strangers in our midst. While some point to Bethany's hospitality, others **challenge the perception that Bethany is friendly**. The community perception communicated by its Cherry Hills Village location and its large, lovely facility may also be off-putting and feel **exclusive rather than welcoming to all**. Such a perception will likely mean that Bethany might have to work extra hard to make this potential obstacle a strength. While programming for young people is perceived as strong, several observed that **youth are involved in only a limited way with adult programs and worship, and that youth leaders are limited**. The **size of the congregation gives rise to a sense of anonymity that is desired by many, but it may give rise to the feeling that "someone else will do it," or that the "staff will do that,"** and may chip away at a strong sense of church community. The **Northern European traditions that give Bethany its roots may impair vision for the future, contributing to fear and restricting interest in or motivation for change**.

Opportunities/Thoughts about Where God is Leading Us:

While Bethany is often described as a **"destination" church** (the average congregant drives more than ten miles to worship), **Bethany's neighbors are "everywhere."** We have the opportunity to define our multiple communities, and our **mission field is likely within a three mile radius of our location**. With multiple resources, we have the opportunity to **use our gifts and resources in the community, everywhere, all of the time**. Our call is for **service not self**, and a **rediscovery of our passion and our soul for ministry**. Bethany has the opportunity to be a **"mentor" church**, a partner with those who make use of our facility and a **founder of a satellite church** in a neighborhood other than Cherry Hills Village. We have the opportunity to minister to and with **immigrant populations, military families, and ecumenical partners, to name but a few**. We have opportunities in the global mission field and with Lutheran Family Services in our backyard.

As we plan, therefore, we hold in tension our history and the truly "reformational" character of Lutheranism. Just as Martin Luther translated the Bible into German so it could be culturally relevant, we too must remain culturally relevant to our mission fields. Hence, we are Lutheran "to the core," when we, like Luther, go out and tell, and when we focus on others, rather than ourselves.