Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Congregational Mission History

2/7/2013

Our Past

In 1960 the U.S. Census Bureau named Irving the fastest growing city in Texas. Population had grown from 2,615 in 1950 to 45,895 in 1960. In May of 1955 Holy Trinity was organized as a new mission. The early years of this new mission were filled with hustle and bustle, just like the city itself. Property was purchased, and a chapel built. A Women’s group was formed, Sunday School was organized, and members invited their neighbors to attend. The focus during this period was on getting the church off the ground and creating space for worship and education. All of our senior, tenured members from that time mentioned that Sunday school was their strongest member from the early church. Members came because they were invited, and in turn, they invited their neighbors. An Education Building was completed in 1966. In 1971 a new, larger sanctuary was constructed for the growing congregation. Four pastors served from 1955 to 1967. Pastor Jacobs served from 1967 to 1983. (16 years) Pastor Hubbard was Senior Pastor from 1983 to 1995. A number of interim and short term Pastors served from 1995 to 2001, when our current Pastor, Norma Cooper came to serve. Holy Trinity has a history of Pastors with relatively long tenures.

In 1984 Ted Becker, Chuck Haight, Bing Wehlander, Dwight & Grace Hull were on the first committee for the After School Care Center. The center was an outgrowth of an adult Sunday school series written by Keith Miller, called 'The Passionate People' - people who took their faith into the community. The church decided to respond to the abduction of a young child from the elementary school next door to the church. Although returned safely, the incident sparked great concern. A task force from the church decided that an after-school program for “latch-key” children (children home alone after school) could be offered. The Holy Trinity Learning Center was “born”. Eventually the Center grew to all-day care. The Center provided safe, loving care to many children in the community. Free and reduced-tuition care was offered. Many years the amount of free and reduced care was $80,000+. There was a downside to this ministry, however. A number of people in the church did not support the program. However, the Learning Center is today one of...
the major reasons that the church continues to operate. We depend on the center for cash flow and rental income. And we continue to provide affordable, safe care to the community.

Another outreach that had a strong impact on the congregation was the Helping Hands ministry. This quote is from Mary Hubbard, a former Pastor’s wife: “We did meals for people who were ill - and those with new babies. There was a pretty well coordinated effort to provide meals for families in time of need. This sort of morphed into care for Lelah Moran. I think the city gave us her name. She was a senior in an old run down house with no money who needed lots of help. I remember cleaning and working over at her house. It needed repairs. She needed help. Somewhere along the way she did inherit some money. When she died, she gave a portion to the church.” The church has put that money to good use over the years to benefit many. This “helping hand” culture also continues to this day in the life of the congregation.

Another former member provided these memories from the 1980s and 90s.
“I remember how the congregation surrounded us with love and support and helped us with our wedding since we had no family in town. I remember the Young Adult group and the great conversations we had, sharing hard times and good times. I remember lots of potlucks. I remember the Family Bible Studies and how we got to know other couples in the church more intimately. I think this has had the biggest impact in my life. I have always sought out some kind of community group for support since I experienced it at Holy Trinity.”

In 1989 the church reached out to the community with a city-wide telephone campaign. All residents in the Irving phone directory were called. Home visits were made to visitors who responded to the invitation. Some of the those contacted in this outreach are still in the congregation today.

Also in the early 1990s a building enhancement initiative was proposed to reshape the worship space and connect the 3 buildings. In general, the proposal was supported by the younger members, but considered unnecessary and expensive by older members. Also around this time, one of church’s beloved lay leaders, who was serving as Council President, died unexpectedly at a church council retreat. The combination of unhappiness with the Learning Center, the failed Building Improvement program and unexpected loss of leadership caused the church to enter a time of internal strife. Some members begin to call for the Pastor to step down. The focus was inward, not outward. There was plenty of blame to go around. From 1990 to 1994, the church’s baptized membership declined from 490 to 280. Average worship attendance fell from 178 to 144.

During this same period, the demographics in Irving began to change. Public transportation brought buses to Irving. Young families looked to suburbs farther out for newer, larger homes. Irving was changing fast from a white suburban community to a diversified urban center with increasing numbers of Hispanics, blacks and Asians.
In 1998, the Sanctuary was remodeled. Gone were the red carpet, the altar rail and the two steps to the altar. Now all could commune together at the table. The wall behind the altar was finished with venetian plaster. The lighting was upgraded. A visitor who attended that year remarked that he attended the church years ago and all he could remember was “how dark it was”. The sanctuary was brighter and more inviting after the upgrade. And the acoustics were tremendously improved with the hard wall surface and removal of carpeting.

In 1989 we created a Mission and Vision Statement. In 2010 we revised the statement. Our members are familiar with the Mission Statement. It is printed in the bulletin each Sunday. We read it aloud at each council and congregation meeting. We use it to test
decisions, such as leasing the church to Templo Rey De Gloria, a non-denominational Hispanic congregation that leases our building for services.

Throughout the years, the church has been involved with many outreach ministries, some of the primary ones have been
  - Contacting others and inviting them to church
  - Caring for children in the After-care/Learning Center
  - Providing food for the needy
  - Building wheelchair ramps and repairing homes for those in need
  - Parkland Bears - creating critters for young children who are patients at Parkland hospital
  - Rag tag team – promoting the Good News with random acts of kindness
  - Several members are long time participants in Mission Builders - they travel to help build church buildings
  - Angel tree

The church has also offered a variety of activities to promote spiritual growth and community. Some of these include:
  - Many excellent Sunday school classes for children and adults
  - Camping
  - Spiritual retreats
  - 2nd Saturday Market and More
  - 4 church youth group – working with 3 area churches to put together a youth group
  - 4 church Vacation Bible School – “
  - Many youth programs
  - Family Koininia groups, bible study groups
  - Vacation Bible School
  - New member classes
  - Primetimers group and Parent’s Night Out groups enjoyed fellowship.
Our Present

Today our worship attendance averages 35 people. Our baptized members number 61. The vast majority of those are 60+. We like to say that “We are few in number, but mighty in the Lord”.

People learn about our church today in a variety of ways. We have a highly visible location on a busy street. We have a website and a Facebook page. We host a 2nd Saturday event 10 months a year where approximately 1500 people come each month to buy, sell, eat and talk. We are known in our community by our 2nd Saturday Market and our Learning Center. Until last year we participated in Irving’s 4th of July parade. Our members invite others to attend.

We impact our community with the service we do through:
- Holy Trinity Learning Center
- Parkland Bears
- Irving Cares food pantry
- Nursing homes service projects
- 2nd Saturday Market and more

We further God’s kingdom by leasing space for Templo Rey De Gloria, a non-denominational Hispanic church to worship.

We give generously to the Synod and we also give an additional 3% of our offerings to local charities.

We are a caring, welcoming, open-minded church. We are open to all baptized believers, regardless of denomination. We assist those who come to our church community as best we can. As Irving is a “transient community” we often have folks who join us for a year or two and then move on. We are happy to serve those who come to us, knowing full well that they most likely will not become long term members. Our communion is open to all baptized believers.

It is important to remind ourselves that our present membership is not representative of our impact on the world. There are many, many people who have walked through the doors of our church and learning center and have been positively impacted. We hear from them occasionally. Many of those people are having a positive impact on the world today.
Our Future

Sometimes our future seems like the “elephant in the room” that no one wants to talk about. We are most comfortable focusing on the present - on what God is doing here and now in our midst. We tend to take an attitude that we will be here as long as God desires us to continue. One respondent to the question “Where do you see us in 10 years?” wrote “I don’t believe the church will be here in 10 years”. I think that thought crosses all of our minds. Yet is encouraging to read the following hopeful responses from members and former members.

What do you want people to think of when they hear Holy Trinity mentioned?
- A caring community was the top response.
- Friendly, generous, inclusive community that is always there when needed
- A church that is committed to service to others

What do you want to be known for?
- Service to others
- Friendly, welcoming, active congregation

Do you want to be known for making disciples or making members? What is the best way to accomplish your goal?
- Disciples.
- How?
- Invite others.
- Bible Study
- Much teaching and openness with others. Be willing to open our minds. (Our Hispanic church tenants have helped with that)
- By living lives that represent the love of God for His creation – that will draw seekers
- Reaching the unchurched

What outreach ministries of your church could push people out of their comfort zones to make a real difference in the lives of people in the community?
- Go door to door inviting people to join us
- Distribute flyers to tell about our mission and vision
- Reach out to guests to make them feel welcome and part of the family
- Improve our worship service by making it more user-friendly, better PA system, better materials to follow
What will our church look like in 10 years?
  Won’t be open
  A full church
  Young people and children in church
  Spanish ministry

From former members:
“I hope that Holy Trinity can continue to foster that sense of belonging and community. I think that is what people are craving these days. Even though I only spent 7 years of my life at that church, I made lifelong friends and memories that I will cherish forever.”
“I hope Holy Trinity can still be a place where friends and neighbors help and support one another in their spiritual growth. Where members are inspired and challenged to reach higher, to believe that God is working through them.”

We hope and pray that we will be receptive to what God calls us to do and that we will be bold to take action in God’s name.

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