

## Experiencing Partnership for Missional Church Process

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This is an account of how the congregation at Peace Lutheran Church began the journey into the Partnership for Missional Church process and the effect this program has had on this congregation and the benefits I have received as a participant.

We received an invitation from the Synod office inviting us and several other congregations in the St. Louis area to attend a meeting detailing the PMC process. Four of us attended this meeting and came away with a feeling of confusion and lack of understanding in how the process would benefit our congregation. Several factors about the program concerned us as a group. The cost of the program was definitely out of our financial realm and a total lack of understanding as to how this process was going to help our small congregation. We returned home with a total lack of confidence and wondering if we had wasted our time in attending the preliminary meeting.

Pastor Robin Morgan, our interim pastor, gave us the book "We Are Here Now" to read to try to better understand the role that this process could play in our congregational life and how we as a congregation would benefit from the process. Several of us read the book and had discussions about what the process would entail. Pastor Morgan has several conversations with the Synod office but we eventually put the program on hold, basically due to financial reasons. We just couldn't grasp how this process would be beneficial to our congregation. Several months passed and we were informed that none of the congregations in the St. Louis area participated in the process and we basically put the matter out of our minds.

About a few months passed the subject came up again when we were informed that there were several congregations in Kansas were interested in being a part of this process. We resurrected the subject and with the aid of guidance from Pastor Morgan and the realization that we needed to do something in our congregation to help us determine our place in our community and the world.

At that time I was President of the church council and presented the process to the council for a vote. After a long period of discussion the council voted to participate in the PMC process. We did not know where we would find the money or the people to get the process started but we put our trust in God to handle this problem for us. God did just that, first came the money, from an anonymous donor, and God inspired several people to step up and volunteer and we were on our way to a whole new experience.

We soon discovered that the process was going to be a journey that would change the culture of our congregation. Although we were unclear of how this would occur we were determined to let God lead us into His preferred and promised future.

The program has had a profound effect on our congregation. The initial discernment with the congregation allowed us to reflect on our past and then put those problems behind us. We were set free to come together as a group with a unified, yet undefined, purpose.

As we journeyed deeper into the program we began to understand how to be church in the community. We came to realize that it wasn't about increasing the size of our congregation but how we could be church in our everyday lives. We developed intentional habits that allowed us to open our hearts and minds to listen to God and let him lead us into His preferred and promised future. One of the most important habits we developed was the Dwelling in the Word. This allowed us to let God into our conversations, instead of trying to proceed on our own agenda.

I have seen our PMC group grow into faithful and motivated leaders in this congregation. I have seen people grow in their faith and their commitment to be church in the community. Our mission and vision for our congregation has started to take shape and a new excitement has revitalized our congregation. We are on our way to being a Missional Church in our community. We recognize that this is still a process and will not end with our participation in the quarterly cluster meetings with the other congregations in Kansas and Kansas City, our journey will continue with the help of God and our commitment to let him guide and lead us into the future.

As an individual and member of this congregation, this process has taught me how to let the light of Christ shine through me in my everyday life. I have become a different person in the last 3 years. People at work and in my social life have noticed the change in me. I now know that this is due to allowing God to be a driving part of my life. I now look at the people in my life with a different perspective. I now understand what a tight grip the world had on my life. I have felt the call to be more than a passive Christian. I have been called to start the journey to become a Parish Ministry Associate and am now in the beginning stage of that process. I have had the opportunity to deliver the sermon in our congregation when Pastor Morgan is away. God continues to mold me and lead down a path that I would have not even entertained a few years ago. Now I look for God's presence in all I do.

God has blessed me in so many ways. I had the opportunity to purchase the company where I have worked for over 34 years. I handle conflict in a totally different manner than I would have several years ago. God had gifted me with a new insight on life. I now look to build up people instead of criticizing their actions. People respect my opinion and I have learned listening skills that allow me to see where people are in their lives and discernment skills that allow me to help them in their journey in life. I don't by any means have all the answers but I know that God does and I rely on him to lead me.

The PMC program and Pastor Morgan were the catalyst that ignited my faith journey. I had been moving forward at my own pace in earlier years but I have had a faithful mentor in Pastor Morgan. She

saw talents in me that I never dreamed were a part of my makeup. I can now look back on my life and see where God had been guiding me through other people in my life. God has been pushing me down His path and nudging me back on track when I veer off course. I now live with joy and peace in my heart and a trust in God that helps me deal with the world and the temptations that are constantly bombarding each of us in our daily lives. I now understand that being church and going to church are two very different things. I now go to church to be refreshed and recharged for the challenges of the world in my everyday life. Being church is not easy but with God's help I can continue to make a difference in the lives of the people I come in contact with in my daily life. I now understand that God is in control and He will lead me on my journey into His preferred and promised future for me.