

**Lord of Life Contemporary Worship Task Force
Final Report to the Council
June 10, 2008**

Summary

The Lord of Life Contemporary Worship Task has completed its objectives of exploring contemporary worship at Lord of Life. The Task Force presented a blended worship pilot service to the congregation on three separate dates in April and May of 2008. Results of the congregational survey suggest that there is strong support within the congregation to offer a blended worship setting as a regular option at Lord of Life. However, doing so would require several upgrades to the fellowship hall, together with some human resource needs. This report summarizes the activities undertaken by the task force in researching contemporary and blended worship services, worship elements that we included in our pilot services, results from the congregational survey, and our recommendations for facility upgrades and human resources if we make blended worship a regular option at Lord of Life.

Background

The Contemporary Worship Task Force was formed by the Council in 2006 to research and explore contemporary worship at Lord of Life. The task force was reorganized in late 2007 with increased and diversified membership. Task force members included: Jim Gray (chair), Meredith Traeholt (co-chair), Barb Hoffer, Bob Salveson, Judy Vollmers, Karl Carlson, and Robin Kress. Advisors to the task force included Pastor Nadine Lehr, Beth Demke (Council President), Cheri Wanek, and Kaye Upgren.

The objectives of the task force were:

- A. Discuss and determine what “contemporary worship” means in regard to worship and how the task force might envision such a service at Lord of Life.
- B. Visit several congregations within the Bismarck-Mandan area who currently offer a “contemporary” service. Based on what was seen and heard, discuss and determine what services or parts thereof might be a fit for Lord of Life.
- C. Should the task force be in agreement that it is the time for Lord of Life to implement such a service, develop a proposed model. This would include all elements of worship.
- D. Bring forth a recommendation to the Board of Worship for consideration and presentation prior to the annual meeting in January of 2008.

The intent of these efforts was to explore contemporary worship as a means of achieving several goals, including:

- A. Providing a less formal worship setting and to encourage personal interaction consistent with our family-friendly focus.
- B. Providing more visitor-friendly worship
- C. Meet the needs of some congregational members that want an alternative service to the ones that we currently offer

Research and Methods

The task force met for the first time in August of 2007 to define their goals and formulate a plan to achieve their objectives. During these initial meetings, it was evident that the term “contemporary worship” meant drastically different things to different people, and there were different visions of what contemporary worship could look like at Lord of Life.

As a means of better defining “contemporary worship”, the task force identified several congregations in Bismarck/Mandan that offered services that could be defined as contemporary. These congregations and services were:

- A. Evangel Assembly of God
- B. Charity Lutheran
- C. Grace Lutheran Brethren
- D. Trinity Lutheran
- E. Good Shepherd-The Well
- F. Good Shepherd North- Horizon Service
- G. First Evangelical Free Church
- H. First Presbyterian Church

Members of the task force visited each of these services to observe them firsthand. To aid in this effort, members of the task force were split into three-member teams, and each team was assigned a subset of services to visit and research. During these worship service visits, task force members were asked to take notes for a follow-up report to the task force. The intent was to describe each service in detail, describe those worship elements that task force members enjoyed, and to identify specific worship elements that would or would not fit at Lord of Life.

A rubric was developed to add consistency to the reports and to allow comparisons among services. The rubric captured information on several worship elements, including:

- A. Location of the service (sanctuary or other setting)
- B. Use of songbooks, hymnals, Powerpoint
- C. Type of hymns (traditional or contemporary)
- D. Info on band (professional/volunteer, no. & type of instruments)
- E. Participation by lay members

The task force convened again in late October and early November to compare notes and present reports from the visits to the services listed above. During these meetings, the task force compiled reports and feedback by task force members on: A) descriptors of each service, B) worship elements that the task force members liked or disliked, C) worship elements that would

be a good fit for Lord of Life, and D) worship elements that would not be a good fit for Lord of Life

Identification of Key Worship Elements for Contemporary Worship

The task force furnished a report to the Board of Worship on November 15 and December 6 that included feedback and recommendations from the worship service research visits. These reports also included recommendations on potential worship formats.

The task force identified the following worship elements as ones that they liked and wanted to be included in a contemporary worship service at Lord of Life:

1. An informal setting, meaning a fellowship hall, casual dress, family-friendly seating. Specifically, the task force liked the family-friendly seating arrangement at Good Shepherd North that utilized a row of chairs in the middle of the space, with a series of round tables with chairs around the perimeter. Task force members also enjoyed casual settings in which the pastors did not wear robes.
2. A liturgy to ensure that it feels “Lutheran”
3. A band to offer music, including keyboards, guitar, bass, drums, vocalists
4. Sharing of the peace at the beginning of the service to set a welcoming tone immediately
5. Youth involvement
6. A mix of contemporary and traditional songs
7. A self-contained bulletin or use of Powerpoint to eliminate the need to for worshipers to change back and forth between hymnals, service books, and the bulletin.

Furthermore, the task force concluded that the worship setting that it envisioned for Lord of Life could more accurately be described as “blended” instead of “contemporary”. This is because it would have traditional elements such as a liturgy, sacraments, and traditional hymns, but also contemporary elements such as a casual setting, some contemporary music, and a band.

Other themes identified from these congregation research visits included:

- A. The common assessment is that Lord of Life is not visitor friendly. For example, task force members cited our lack of a self-contained bulletin. We also discussed the fact that the fellowship hall is off of main foot traffic routes, and people can by-pass the fellowship hall on the way in and out of worship. Also, having people pay for coffee and refreshments is not “friendly”.
- B. We offer a large number of worship settings for a congregation our size. Some task force members felt that all of our services are the same, while others stated that there are large differences.
- C. Many congregations offer several different worship services at set times each week to allow members to choose the service that they enjoy. In contrast, we don’t have set worship times for each service. Some members like some services (or dislike particular ones), and would like to opportunity pick which service they participate in each week.

- D. We acknowledge that we are a relatively small congregation and that we don't have the depth of musical talent that some congregations do.
- E. If done correctly, a blended worship service could fit nicely with Lord of Life's focus on family-friendly ministry. This is especially true of the service is offered in the fellowship hall with family-friendly, casual seating. This could also encourage inter-generational fellowship, a key component of our family-friendly focus.
- F. Contemporary/blended worship is not just for youth or young families. We observed people of all ages that chose this type of worship.

Offering Pilot Blended Worship Services

After conducting its research on contemporary worship services in Bismarck/Mandan and identifying worship elements that might be a good fit at Lord of Life, the task force was faced with the difficulty of communicating its findings to the congregation and adequately describing our vision of blended worship. The task force realized that this was a difficult task.

Therefore, the task force proposed to the Council in December of 2007 that we provide the congregation with several opportunities to experience a blended worship setting firsthand. The task force proposed that we offer blended worship services on at least two occasions, and that we use the opportunity to gather data and solicit feedback from the congregation. The Council approved our proposal.

The task force offered a blended worship service on three dates: A) Sunday, April 13 (both service times), B) Sunday, May 11 (both service times), and C) Wednesday, April 14. During each of those worship services, the task force included several elements that we had earlier identified as being important. These included:

- A. Casual, family-friendly setting in the fellowship hall. This included the arrangement of rows of chairs in the middle of the space with round tables around the perimeter.
- B. A liturgy
- C. A self-contained bulletin
- D. Live music with a band
- E. Refreshments before and after worship to encourage fellowship

The senior pastor was asked for input on required worship elements to make the service "Lutheran". Music was provided by a band that included: A) several vocalists, B) two keyboardists, C) drums, D) lead guitar, E) bass guitar, and F) rhythm guitar.

The task force made a decision to hire three musicians from the University of Mary to play bass guitar, lead guitar, and drums. This was met with some opposition from some members of the congregation. However, the task force realized that we most likely lacked adequate musical talent in our congregation for these musical parts. Furthermore, in order for the congregation to make an informed decision on whether they liked or disliked the blended worship service, they needed to observe what the service could look like with quality musical talent, not what we could present with the level of talent that we have available. We also realized that presenting a quality

worship service would require a significant commitment in terms of rehearsal time, and the three musicians from University of Mary could participate with less rehearsal than a lay member could.

At each of three blended worship services, members of the congregation were asked to complete a short survey. Survey questions

1. Did you enjoy the blended worship service (Yes or No)?
2. Would you like to see a service like this offered as a regular worship option (Yes or No)?
3. Would you help with or participate in a blended worship service if it was offered as a regular worship option in the future (Yes or No)?

The survey also included a section for members to offer comments.

Results from the Pilot Worship Services

A report summarizing the results of the congregational surveys from the blended worship settings is included with this report. There were 417 responses to the first question (“Did you enjoy the blended worship service?”), 87% of which were a “Yes”. This indicates that the vast majority of members enjoyed the worship setting. There were 410 responses to the second question (“Would you like to see a service like this offered as a regular worship option?”), with 81% of the respondents answering “Yes”. Results from these first two questions from the survey indicate that over 80% of the congregation enjoyed the blended worship setting and would like to see it offered as a regular worship option.

Many congregation members also responded in the survey that they would be willing to help with or participate in a blended worship service if it was offered as regular worship service option in the future. Over 70 members answered “Yes” to question 3 and included their name on the survey. This list of volunteers can be made available to the Council upon request.

Other themes from the surveys included:

- A. People generally liked the music.
- B. The sound system is inadequate. With only front speakers, the volume near the front of the church can be too loud, while it may be difficult to hear in the rear of the fellowship hall.
- C. Members liked the self-contained bulletin.
- D. Some members would like the musical notes to songs included in the bulletin in addition to the lyrics.
- E. The informal setting in the fellowship hall was family-friendly and lent itself to fellowship and personal interactions.
- F. Many members, while liking the blended service setting, wanted the opportunity to also worship in a traditional setting. Many members wanted the blended worship setting to be an option for worship.

Resource Needs for Regular Blended Worship Service

Over 80% of the congregation responded that they would like to see a blended worship service offered as a regular option at Lord of Life. Survey responses varied from wanting blended worship once a week to twice a year, with the majority of responses wanting the blended service once a month. However, regardless of the frequency, the task force has identified the following needs if blended worship was offered as a regular worship option:

Physical space upgrades

The fellowship hall is a space that is conducive to an informal, blended worship service. However, based on the three pilot services experienced to date, the following improvement would need to be made to the fellowship hall to make a quality blended worship service.

- A. Sound system: The current sound system in the fellowship hall consists of a small sound board, several microphones, and two large speakers at the front of the space. To make the sound system adequate for a regular blended worship service, the following upgrades would need to be made:
 - a. Adding monitor speakers for musicians
 - b. Improving or adding cordless microphones
 - c. Purchasing cords to run from the stage to a soundboard placed near the rear of the space
 - d. Adding rear speakers to improve sound quality
 - e. An improved soundboard with a larger number of channels
- B. Lighting: The lighting in the fellowship hall needs significant improvement in two main areas:
 - a. Improving lighting on the stage, especially to reduce shadows over the pulpit and altar
 - b. Adding shades or curtains to the windows to reduce light pollution and glare
- C. Shutters for the kitchen: Shutters could be utilized to better separate the kitchen from the fellowship hall. This will reduce noise from the kitchen, and allow workers in the kitchen to work productively without fear of disrupting the service.
- D. Schematic for setup: Setting up chairs and tables was time-consuming and challenging. If the fellowship hall is going to be utilized as a worship space on a more regular basis, we will need to develop schematics or marks on the floor to more easily identify locations of chairs and tables.
- E. Improvements to the stage: As described above, the poor lighting on the stage resulting in the pulpit being situated largely in a shadow. While improved lighting on the stage is needed, it is also suggested that a proscenium be built to allow the pulpit to be placed out from the stage. This will not only address the issue of lighting, but will also improve sight lines to persons seated near the sides of the space.

Human resource needs

Most of the time and effort to present the blended worship services was expended by members of the task force and other volunteers. The task force stresses that the time commitment for volunteers to plan and implement a blended worship service is significant. If the congregation

wants a blended service as a regular option, the task force advises the Council that human resources will be required in the following areas:

- A. Setup and take down: It took approximately two hours for the task force to set up the fellowship hall for each service. A schematic for chairs and tables would decrease the amount of time required for set up. However, time will still be required for take down of chairs and tables, cleaning and vacuuming. Time will also be required to set up and dismantle the altar and stage decorations for each service.
- B. Coordinating worship and directing music: Coordinating the blended worship pilot services was conducted by members of the task force. If blended worship is offered as frequent option at Lord of Life, the time commitments for a worship coordinator and music director must be considered. It was estimated that it took approximately 20 hours of time to select music for each service, along with another 5 hours for rehearsal, for a total of 25 hours for the worship coordinator/music director per service. An increased frequency of doing the blended service would likely reduce both the music preparation and rehearsal time needed, if the group is consistent from service to service.

There are essentially two options for meeting the needs for a worship coordinator and music director: a) use a volunteer that is willing and able to allocate 25 hours of time per service, or b) hire a worship coordinator to the staff. The frequency of the blended worship service will largely dictate which option is appropriate.

- C. Musicians: A minimum band for blended worship service would consist of three vocalists, drummer, bass guitar, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, keyboards, and another rhythm instrument. A soundboard operator would also be required. This would total six persons plus the three vocalists.

As with the worship coordinator/music director, we could utilize paid individuals or volunteers to meet these needs. At this time, it is estimated that the vocalists would require five hours of group rehearsal and one hour of individual rehearsal per service. It is also estimated that musicians would require approximately ten hours of rehearsal and practice per service.

If we use the model that was used with a mix of volunteers and professional musicians, we could utilize congregation members for the vocalists, keyboards, rhythm guitar, and songboard mixer. However, we would hire musicians for the drummer, bass guitar, and lead guitar parts. At a going rate of \$50 per service this would equate to \$150 per service.

- D. Licenses for music: Sheet music and lyrics cannot be reproduced and printed without the appropriate licenses. One potential source for lyrics and music is CCLI, an online website where congregations can access lyrics and music for many songs. Currently, the general CCLI license is \$249 per year, with an additional \$179 for the upgraded SongSelect page, for a total cost of \$428 per year.

Recommendations

There is strong support within the congregation for us to offer a blended worship service as a regular worship option. Therefore, the task force offers the following recommendations:

- The overwhelming sentiment from congregation members is that they would like to see blended worship as a regular option, while retaining the option of participating in a traditional service. Therefore, the task force recommends that Lord of Life make a blended worship setting a regular worship option. Making a blended worship service a regular option will likely require the Council and Team of Worship to assess our current suite of worship settings and possibly eliminate one or more settings. The task force cannot recommend which services should be replaced by a blended worship setting since this is the responsibility of the Team of Worship.
- If blended worship is implemented as a regular option, the task force recommends offering a similar worship setting as what was offered during the pilot services. Key elements to be included in the blended service should be: A) a casual, family-friendly setting in the fellowship hall, B) a self-contained bulletin, C) a liturgy to ensure the service is “Lutheran”, D) a mix of contemporary and traditional worship elements, and E) live music with a band.
- Volunteers could be utilized for most of the workload of a blended worship service if it was offered four times per year or less. However, if blended worship is offered more frequently than that, we recommend adding a worship coordinator/music director to the staff. Please note that it may be difficult to find a qualified person to fill this role less than full time. Therefore, the Council needs to balance the frequency of offering a blended worship service relative to whether or not there is sufficient workload to keep a worship coordinator/music director employed.
- In addition to a worship coordinator, adding blended worship as a regular option will require some upgrades to the fellowship hall. If blended worship is implemented as a regular option, the task force recommends that we make upgrades to the fellowship hall sound system, lighting, and stage as described earlier in the report.
- We recognize that the congregation has previously approved funding to be allocated to hire a children’s minister coordinator/education director to take ownership of providing ministry to our younger members and to help us create a family-friendly ministry focus. The task force cannot comment as to which position is most important relative to our ministry goals. This is the task of the Council. However, we do stress that blended worship can help us reach our goal of offering family-friendly worship. We urge the Council to prayerfully consider the needs for a worship coordinator relative to the children’s ministry coordinator, both on a short-term and long-term basis.

Financial Report

Presenting the congregation with the three blended worship services required some financial commitment. A summary of the contributions and expenditures for the services can be found below.

Contributions:

Income for the blended worship services was derived by free-will donations from the congregation, along with funding provided by the Team of Worship. A breakdown of the contributions for the blended worship services is as follows:

Donations received:	\$747
<u>Contributions from Team of Worship</u>	<u>\$450</u>
Total contributions & donations:	\$1197

Expenses:

Primary expenditures for the blended worship services included paying three musicians (\$50 per service), plus renting equipment for the sound system.

Total expenditures were as follows:

Musicians:	\$750 (3 musicians X \$50/service X 5 services)
<u>Sound equipment:</u>	<u>\$250</u>
Total expenses:	\$1000

Contributions minus expenses: \$197

Note: This sum still exists in a special blended worship dedicated account under the Team of Worship.

Please note that the Team of Property also contributed \$73.30 for sound equipment accessories for the blended service pilot services.

This concludes the report from the Lord of Life Contemporary Worship Task Force. The members of the task force thank the Council and the Team of Worship for its support and input.

Respectfully submitted,

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