

## **Ministry and Business Plan for Early Childhood Ministry at Trinity Lutheran Darmstadt**

### **Background**

Trinity Lutheran Darmstadt has had a long and well-known history of Lutheran education for children. Shortly after the church's founding in 1847, the congregation established an elementary school in 1853 for the Lutheran education of its children. The school began as a one room school with all grades taught by the pastor. Major emphasis was the study of the Bible, catechism, hymns, and music of the Lutheran tradition. Over the years, the school expanded to a two-room, then four-room, and then an eight-room school, grades 1-8, then adding preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten. Supporting this expansion of classes, the 1942 building of three classrooms, cafeteria, and gym were expanded with two additional classrooms and offices in 1962 and then two more classrooms and basement room in 1987. In addition to teaching religion and the core subjects, the school also provided a hot lunch, sports, and music programs. Enrollment consisted of members of Trinity and other Lutheran churches until 1976 when the school officially opened its doors to non-Lutherans. Through the years, the school also became an outreach ministry to the community for bringing members of other denominations and those without a church home into the Lutheran Church at Trinity. The school became accredited by the National Lutheran School Accreditation. Funding of the school came through the church budget, member and non-member tuition and fees, and fundraising events. However, funding from the church and enrollment from the church and community could not sustain the cost of the staff of full-time teachers with benefits for an eight-room elementary school. The Choice program was not yet in effect in Indiana. To the dismay of the congregation, the school closed in 2010 because of funding issues. Sadly, the church lost not only its Lutheran education ministry for its members but also its central outreach ministry to the community.

However, the congregation retained many of the school supplies and continued to maintain the school building by adding a new roof. In 2014 the congregation appointed the Lutheran Education Exploratory Committee to study the feasibility of opening an early childhood ministry. In 2015 the congregation received a sizable bequest from the sainted Tad Wollerman and in 2016 used the monies to pay off the remaining school debt and establish the Legacy Fund. In October of 2016, the stewardship board kicked off the 3 R's Campaign (Restore – Renew – Reach) with the goal of adding to the Legacy Fund which includes a Ministry category for new and expanded ministry, particularly an early childhood ministry.

In February of 2016, the congregation began a revitalization process with Transforming Churches Network of our Synod entitled *The 19:10 Project*. In May of 2016, the congregation voted to pursue five prescriptions toward transforming our church for outward focused mission and ministry. Among the recommendations was the prescription below.

Young Families: In tandem with the research for the new outward-focused Vision Statement, Trinity Lutheran Church will seek to form ministries that reach out to young families in the community. This study will include, but not be limited to, the exploration of starting a new Preschool and/or Daycare. Under the leadership of the Chairman of The Lutheran Education Exploration Committee, a recommendation will be made to the congregation no later than the February 2017, Voters meeting. A decision on whether to start an Early Childhood Education ministry at Trinity will be made by the Voters no later than the May 2017 Voters Meeting. Other ministries, such as Financial Peace University, parenting classes, marriage enrichment, MOPS, interest groups, etc, will also be considered by May 1, 2017. (Matthew 19:14)

In September of 2016, the congregation participated in a visioning day, which developed two mission targets for outreach, the first being families with young children. The voters passed the vision statement below at its meeting in November of 2016.

### **Mission Target #1**

Trinity Lutheran Darmstadt serves **families with young children** and equips parents to bring their children to Jesus, because . . .

### **Biblical Motivation**

The LORD desires little children to come into his kingdom through the nurture and guidance of their parents.

*Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:13-14)*

*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)*

### **Strategy/Plan**

We will serve and help parents balance work, family, and spiritual life by:

- 1) Opening a new Preschool/Daycare;
- 2) Sponsoring regular children's activities at church;
- 3) Providing practical training for parents – Parenting, Marriage & Family, and Financial Classes;
- 4) Using our campus as a community recreation center which is family friendly;
- 5) Starting Support Groups for Moms and Dads;
- 6) And teaching parents the Christian faith through the Adult Information Class.

As part of the 19:10 Project prescriptions and the above vision statement, the Lutheran Education Exploratory Committee completed the *Genesis Project* under the direction of consultant Stu Tietz of the synod's board of education. Demographic studies showed that there were over 1700 children ages 0-4 within a five-mile radius of the church and this number was expected to grow. Surveys showed that other preschools/childcare ministries in the area were growing or expanding services with the closest competition being 5 miles away. Surveys of the congregation reported 95% support for beginning an early childhood ministry. The top desired characteristics of such a ministry were a Lutheran emphasis, quality teachers, quality education, and outreach. Individual interviews of leadership and focus groups also revealed support from the congregation but with some concern over finances. Stu Tietz presented a summary report to the congregation on December 11, 2016, which recommended proceeding with continued study and planning. On February 26, 2017, the congregation voted to appoint a task force to develop a ministry and business plan for an early childhood ministry. To date, the task force has reviewed the Synod publication "In His Hands," a startup manual for early childhood ministry. The task force also visited two model LCMS preschools/daycares and received counsel from Kathy Frank, a consultant with the Indiana District. In addition, the task force investigated resources from the 4C's (Community Coordinated Child Care) of Southern Indiana and available grants. After much study and discussion, the task force provides for the congregation's review the following ministry and business plan for beginning an early childhood ministry at Trinity Darmstadt.

## **Mission Statement**

The current mission statement of the congregation is below.

United by the Holy Spirit, Trinity Lutheran Church and School joyfully proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ and serves all people with Christian love.

The mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to families and their young children while serving them in Christian love certainly applies to the mission of an early childhood ministry at Trinity Darmstadt.

During the *Genesis Project*, the Lutheran Education Exploratory Committee also developed the following *Mission Statement* which was well received during interviews with the congregation.

- Trinity Lutheran Preschool is an exciting opportunity that will reach out to children and families sharing the message and love of Jesus Christ.
- Serve families, educate young children, encourage congregation members to serve, connect parents to the church, develop a relationship with unchurched, bring them into the kingdom of God.

## **Vision**

The vision of the early childhood ministry is to serve families by educating their young children in the Lutheran faith and all aspects of their learning and development. The child care aspect of the ministry also provides a safe place for their children to play and grow in a loving environment as parents balance work and life responsibilities. However, parents are still the primary teachers and caregivers for their children. The congregation also seeks to serve families by providing parenting classes, support groups, and religious instruction so that the Christian faith is passed on in the home. As desired from the congregational surveys of the *Genesis Project*, the priorities of the ministry are a Lutheran emphasis, quality teachers, quality education, and outreach.

*Lutheran Emphasis* – The early childhood ministry will remain distinctly Lutheran by engaging Lutheran teachers and aides, teaching Lutheran curriculum, and participating in Lutheran worship. The administrator and teachers will be trained in our Concordia universities or certified through colloquy. As members of the congregation, they will promote Lutheran worship and congregational life to the children and their parents. In accordance with our belief statement and religious employment criteria, priority will be towards teacher aides from our congregation or other Lutheran congregations. At a minimum, teacher aides with other Christian faith backgrounds will be required to attend the adult information class taught by the pastor as part of their training and encouraged to join our church. Religious instruction will use the *One in Christ* curriculum provided through Concordia Publishing House. Instruction will also include the teaching of the foundational texts from the Catechism, Lutheran hymns, and music. The pastor will lead chapel each week and model Lutheran worship in the sanctuary.

*Quality Teachers* – The early childhood ministry will commission an administrator and teachers who have completed their degree in early childhood education from our Concordia universities. They will stay current in their profession by annually completing educational or in-service training focusing on topics relevant to early childhood. The congregation will recruit and retain

quality teachers by providing quality pay and benefits according to the Indiana District guidelines.

*Quality Education* – The early childhood ministry will be certified as an Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry with the state of Indiana. The ministry will pursue the Voluntary Certification Program entitled *Paths to QUALITY* and aspire to meet requirements for Level 1 (Health and Safety), Level 2 (Learning Environments), Level 3 (Planned Curriculum), and finally Level 4 (National Accreditation) through the National Lutheran School Accreditation. *4 C's (Community Coordinated Child Care) of Southern Indiana* provides a free mentor and coaching toward *Paths to QUALITY* funded by the state of Indiana and the Welborn Baptist Foundation.

*Outreach Ministry* – The early childhood ministry will be an integral part of the congregation's life, service, and outreach to the community. The pastor, staff, and congregation will seek to develop relationships with the children and their parents in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Families will receive communication and visits from the pastor, staff, and board of outreach. Congregation members will be encouraged to volunteer in the ministry by sponsoring families, serving as classroom readers, helping with projects, and participating in donation drives and fundraisers. The church will provide classes on Biblical parenting, marriage, and finances. Members will invite families to interest groups, outreach events, and family friendly fellowship activities. Parents will be invited to the adult information class for Christian instruction so that they may bring themselves and their children to Jesus in baptism. As per the congregation vision statement, our goal is to encourage families to join our church, not because of reduced member tuition rates, but by sharing our witness, mercy, and life together as the body of Christ.

### **Governance**

The ministry would be governed through the creation of an early childhood education board, whose chairman reports to the church council. Members of the board will be the administrator, one staff member, the pastor, and members of the congregation who include parents and others passionate for the ministry. The administrator would be responsible to the pastor for matters of faith, worship, and religious instruction. The administrator would be responsible to the board for oversight of staff, curriculum, policies, finances, and other matters regarding the operation of the ministry.

### **Startup and Operation**

After voter approval of the Ministry and Business Plan and authorization to proceed, the task force will begin the search for an administrator by pursuing names from the Indiana District of those trained in our Concordia Universities in early childhood education. The administrator would be called to a full-time position and in place nine months to a year before opening the ministry. The preliminary time is necessary for the administrator to make preparations for beginning a successful ministry which includes the following:

- Begin the certification process as an unlicensed registered ministry.
- Begin the Voluntary Certification Program *Paths to Quality*.
- Apply for grants.
- Refine the financial plan.
- Oversee needed renovation of the facility and playground improvements.

- Develop policies, brochures, parent and staff manuals.
- Coordinate the furnishings for the classrooms and acquire supplies.
- Prepare curriculum.
- Market the ministry through website, social media, open houses, and community events.
- Recruit staff.
- Register and enroll children.
- Develop means of communication and methods of billing/receiving.

The early childhood ministry would provide both education (preschool/pre-k) and child care for children ages 3-5. The ministry would follow the 180 day calendar year of the Vanderburgh County school system with hours of operation from 7 am to 5 pm. Parents would choose either 2-day (Tuesday/Thursday), 3-day (Monday/Wednesday/Friday), or 5-day care. Children could enroll in any combination of the below sessions.

Early Morning Care	7am-8:30am
School Session	8:30am-11:30am
Lunch and Afternoon Care	11:30am-2:30pm
Late Afternoon Care	2:30pm-5pm

Classes will integrate 3 and 4 year old children, especially during the startup period, but over time they may also provide the traditional preschool and pre-kindergarten age segregation if desired by the parents. Classes would operate in any of the four classrooms built in the 1962 or 1987 additions. The 1942 classrooms may also serve as resource rooms. The existing gym and playground provide excellent opportunities for indoor and outdoor play. Parents choosing the lunch session would provide their child a bag lunch which would be refrigerated in the basement kitchen.

During the first year of operation, the administrator would also serve as the primary teacher during the school session and would be assisted by teacher aides throughout the day. As enrollment grew, more teachers and teacher aids would serve on the staff. Like the administrator, teachers would also be called from our Concordia Universities and work full time with benefits. Teacher aids would work part-time (20 hours/week) and receive an hourly wage.

### **Expenses**

Primary expenses would be for the wages and benefits of the staff. Other ongoing costs would be for marketing, curriculum and consumables, and replacement of equipment and furnishings. Although the congregation is currently maintaining the building, expenses would increase for utilities, custodial care, and liability insurance when the building is fully occupied through the week. Startup expenses would include some minor renovation of the classrooms for certification, security, and aesthetics in addition to adding a fence around the playground.

### **Funding**

The majority of funding would come from tuition and fees paid by the parents. To ensure that the congregation retains an investment in the ministry, additional funding would come from the church budget and congregational fundraising events. As enrollment builds during the first few years, a major source of startup funding may come from the Legacy Fund under the Ministry category for new and expanding ministry. Startup funding may also come from grants from the following sources.

\$12,000	4C's (Community Coordinated Child Care) of Southern Indiana
\$5,000	Lutheran Women's Missionary League of the Indiana District
\$5,000	Lutheran Mission Action Council of the Evansville Circuits
\$50,000	Indiana District New Ministry Initiative Matching Grant

### **Financial Plan**

Appendix A shows a spreadsheet of one scenario of a financial plan for an early childhood ministry startup. Wages and benefits for the administrator, teachers, and aides are based upon model Lutheran programs in the Indian District. Tuition and fees are also based upon quality Lutheran programs and local competition. Rates for childcare are lower than the preschool/pre-k rate. The enrollment is estimated to build over a five-year period to three classes of 16 students, conducted by the administrator, two teachers, and three aids. Additional aides are contracted depending upon the need for childcare in the remainder of the day. During the startup phase, revenues are supplemented by the Legacy Fund and grants until the staff and class size reach efficiency, and the ministry becomes self-sustaining in the fifth year. By leveraging the existing facility and \$10,000 from the church budget, a \$200,000+ ministry which reaches 50 families each year is sustainable.

### **Marketing**

Established early childhood ministries often grow and retain enrollment through word of mouth of their quality program. However, intentional marketing of the early childhood ministry is essential to build the enrollment during the startup phase to ensure a viable ministry. Listed below are some possible marketing methods.

Build a prospect list through registration at outreach events (Trunk-or-Treat, Darmstadt Day)

Send informational emails to prospects.

Pass out promotional items at fairground events.

Advertise on the Darmstadt Facebook page.

Develop a website which provides all the information parents need concerning hours, rates, etc.

Encourage members to hand out business cards and hangers which direct parents to the website.

Complete a direct mail campaign which directs households to the website.

Register with 4 C's of Southern Indiana, so parents searching for child care will find us.

Make press releases and advertise in the newspaper.

Conduct open houses and tours of the facility.

### **Risk**

During interviews and surveys of the *Genesis Project*, some congregation members expressed concern about the viability of an early childhood ministry and its effect upon the finances of the congregation. An early childhood ministry today would differ from our elementary school which closed in 2010 in several ways. An early childhood ministry which offers a preschool and full five-day child care does not yet face major competition from the public-school system. Funding of most faith-based early childhood ministries is accomplished totally through tuition and fees to support the staff and pay for materials while the congregation only provides the facility, utilities, maintenance, and insurance. If the state does begin to take a more active role in preschools, Indiana has led the way in Choice programs for families to receive reimbursement for tuition payments to faith-based organizations. Many parochial elementary schools in Indiana are operating under the Choice program without any infringement

upon their religious teaching. Also, the age-integrated classrooms and use of part-time teacher aides make it easier to balance enrollment numbers and number of staff to ensure the ministry operates cost-efficiently.

By using our well-maintained day school to begin an early childhood ministry, our congregation does not need to invest in a new building and worry about filling empty classrooms to pay off a building loan. Other than a few renovations for certification, security, room aesthetics, playground, and fencing, we already have a fine facility of large classrooms which many startup ministries would envy. Our congregation currently has no debt, and we have most of the required startup monies in hand through the Legacy Fund which would prevent us from taking on debt during the first few years of the startup phase. Many early childhood ministries have started successfully with much less than the blessings our Lord has given us.

### **Timeline**

The crucial element for beginning the early childhood ministry is having an administrator called and on location 9 months to one year before a fall opening. Depending upon availability and concurrence of the right person for the position, the ministry could begin as early as the fall of 2018 or as late as the fall of 2019.

### **Executive Summary**

The startup of an early childhood ministry at Trinity Darmstadt is in keeping with our long history of the Lutheran education of children. The mission and vision of this ministry fit perfectly within our existing church mission and vision statements for outreach to the community. The *Genesis Project* showed that demographics for such a ministry are very favorable and there is widespread support from the congregation. The ministry would meet the congregation's desires for Lutheran emphasis, quality teachers, quality education, and outreach. The ministry would create three new full-time positions for our synod's church workers who would also bring other skills to our congregation's ministries and worship life. The business plan is sound, and the risk is low. The Lord has blessed our congregation with the facility and resources to begin and sustain a needed ministry in our community for the purpose of serving, sharing the Gospel, and bringing young families to faith in Jesus Christ. We would be remiss if we did not take advantage of this great ministry opportunity for our church to grow the kingdom of God at Trinity Darmstadt.

### **Recommendation**

The task force recommends that the congregation review the above Ministry and Business Plan and submit their comments, questions, concerns, and ideas to any of the below task force members. After incorporating input from the congregation, the task force recommends that a resolution be brought to the voters requesting approval to begin an early childhood ministry at Trinity Darmstadt.

#### Early Childhood Ministry Task Force

Dennis Clark	Pastor Keith Knea	Bob Eberhart	Sue Laughbaum
Kay Hoffherr	Alan Letterman	Linda Sue Korff	Pastor Stan Temme