



# A Process for Discerning a Purpose Statement A Ten-Step “How To” Process for Your Congregation

## Discovering God’s Will for Your Congregation

God’s mission is to redeem the world, and God so loved this world, that God sent his only Son, Jesus, to accomplish that mission. Jesus’ mission is most clearly summed up in John 10:10, “I have come so that you may have life and have it abundantly.” The goal is to discover and put into words how your congregation will join in God’s mission to redeem the world so that all might have the abundant life. We are working together to discover YOUR purpose in God’s mission. Hopefully, after working this process, you will have a purpose statement that will begin to guide your congregation’s future.

This process will be informed by prayer and Bible study. We are seeking God’s will for your congregation. Seeking God’s will is a **humble** process. It is being open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. It is being open to creative and new ways of being the church, because the Holy Spirit is by nature a creative force. It is a humble process because we seek to do God’s will; not my will, not your will, but God’s will. **Begin with prayer.**

### 1. Open with prayer:

*Almighty God, your mission is to redeem the world. Inspire us by your Holy Spirit with passion and courage so we can join you in that work. Open our eyes to see you moving in our community. Open our ears to hear your call. Open our hearts to love our neighbors. Open our minds to imagine new ways of sharing the good news about Jesus in the world. AMEN.*

*Pray the Lord’s Prayer exactly as it is written below.*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this congregation.**  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this community.**  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

**2. Context:** Before this session, members of your congregation, not the pastor, compiled significant demographic data and a map of the community with pins or dot stickers indicating where members live. This data should include: population, schools, health care facilities, major businesses, ethnic diversity, level of education of residents, income levels, poverty levels, types of homes and housing, recreational areas, distance most members live from church. Check the 2010 US Census Report for this data.

Your purpose is shaped by God’s will for you. It is shaped by your unique geography and demographic situation. It is shaped by your unique history. So your purpose is unique. Look at the map and demographic information right now.

Answer these questions:

- What is unique about your context?
- What is surprising about the numbers?
- What makes God cry?
- What give God joy?

Put map, data, and responses to these questions up on a wall.

Look at the map and demographic information; this is your mission field.  
You are missionaries to these areas.

**3. Mission Field:** Now look at this information about church affiliation. Share the ARDA results, for example...

- 1980-65.4% of residents of Clay County members of a church
- 2000-65.0% of residents of Clay County members of a church
- 2010-60.9% of residents of Clay County members of a church
- If this trend continues, what percent of the population will be unchurched in 2020?
- Nearly 40% of the population is unchurched today.

**This is your mission field.**

**4. Bible Study:** Ask the pastor or lay leader to give a two-minute overview of the book of Acts.  
Break into small groups of four to six. Give each group one of these chapters to read.

Bible Study Acts 2, 10, 16 in small groups (25 minutes)

- Select someone to be recorder and reporter. Read the Bible text out loud.
- Read it a second time silently.
- What is God doing in these verses? Underline it!
- What did the people of faith do? Underline with a squiggly line.
- What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?
- Write your answers on the newsprint with markers.

Each small group should write responses on newsprint and then report to the larger group: What is God doing in Acts 2? Acts 10? Acts 14? What are people of faith doing? What can all churches learn from this?

**5. Missional Questions:** God's mission is to redeem the world. How your congregation joins God in that work is your purpose. Your task is to discover what God's will is for your congregation. "Thy will be done."

Discussion:

- Why in God's name does your congregation exist?
- What is God calling you to do for Christ's sake?

**6. Pray again these prayers:**

*Pray: Almighty God, your mission is to redeem the world. Inspire us by your Holy Spirit with passion and courage so we can join you in that work. Open our eyes to see you moving in our community. Open our ears to hear your call. Open our hearts to love our neighbors. Open our minds to imagine new ways of sharing the good news about Jesus in the world.*

**Pray the Lord's Prayer as written below:**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this congregation.**  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this community.**  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

Invite participants to walk around the room and review the notes from the Bible Study.

**Pray silently for 10 minutes.** What is God's purpose for our congregation?

On a post-it note complete this sentence: "God's purpose for \_\_\_\_\_ church is . . ." adding 12 words or less.

**7. Create one statement for the small group:** After the silent prayer and everyone has created a purpose statement, in small groups read your purpose statements out loud and try to take the best from each purpose statement to **create one statement for the small group**. Give each small group a sheet of newsprint to write their 12-word purpose statement.

**8. Present the purpose statements from all small groups.** Identify common words in all the statements. Which words or ideas come up most often? List all the verbs. List all the adverbs.

**9. Work to create one single purpose statement:** Remember, this is a humble process...what is God's will?...not mine...come to consensus, don't vote.

### **10. Celebrate your new Purpose Statement!**

Discuss ways of developing "buy-in" for the purpose statement:

- **Rewrite and rework by leadership team**
- **Approval by leadership team, approval by congregational consensus?**
- **Preaching series on the purpose statement?**
- **Articles about it in the newsletter**
- **Poster design contest-website-letterhead design**
- **Adult education series**

Consider inviting an "outsider" to come in and lead this process.

This process is based on *Living Lutheran: Renewing Your Congregation*, by the Rev. Dr. David Daubert and adapted by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Skow-Anderson.

## Creativity Exercise-Just for Fun

Props: Beanie Babies

Psychologist Gary Smalley created a personality inventory based on a set of questions. Your personality type is illustrated by an animal:

1. Lion-leader, in charge, take charge
2. Beaver-busy, active, worker
3. Otter-playful, fun, life's a party
4. Golden Retriever-loyal friend, always there for others

*PorGuCan* is a children's book that creates crazy animals by using three parts of different animals. (Check the library for this book.)

In biology class you learned that there are 6 classes of animals:

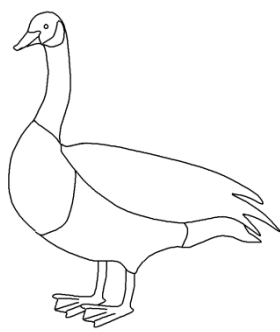
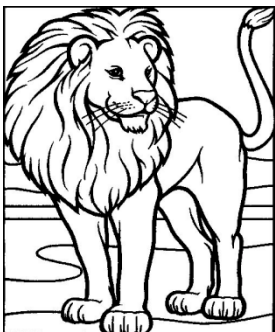
1. Mammals
2. Fish
3. Birds
4. Invertebrates
5. Reptiles
6. Amphibians

Think about your congregation. What animal characteristic does your congregation need to participate in God's mission? Name the animal. Name the characteristic of that animal that the church needs.

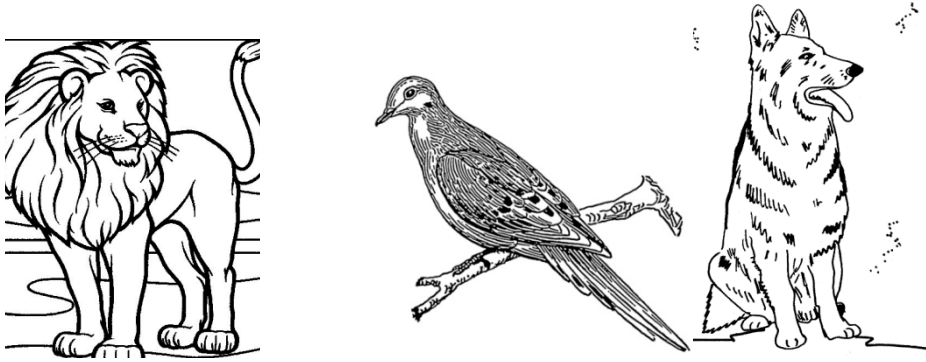
Each small group creates your own *Por Gua Can* for your congregation. Name three animals with three "animal characteristics" that will help your congregation join in God's mission to redeem the world.

One congregation came up with these mascots:

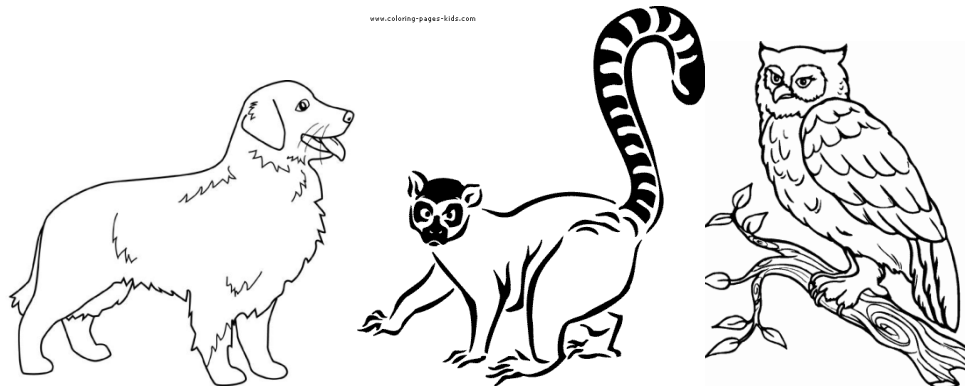
Lion/goose/camel-LI-GOO-MEL



Lion/dove/German shepherd-LI-DO-SHEP



Golden Retriever/meerkat/owl-GOLDEN MEER OWL or Meerdowl (meer dog owl)



## **Bible Study**

Count off to create random groups, making sure spouses are in separate groups.  
There should be at least four in each group.  
Take 20-30 minutes for each group to read their passage and answer the questions.

### **Book of Acts: A Two-Minute Introduction**

**Author:** the same author wrote both Luke and Acts. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts.

**Date of Writing:** The Book of Acts was likely written between 61-64 A.D.

**Purpose of Writing:** The Book of Acts was written to provide a history of the early church. The emphasis of the book is the importance of the day of Pentecost and being empowered to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. The book sheds light on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers, guides, teaches, and serves as our Counselor.

Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, was the most influential apostle. Before he was converted, Paul took great pleasure in persecuting and killing Christians. Paul's dramatic conversion on the Damascus road is a highlight of the Book of Acts.

The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

### **Outline of the Book of Acts**

1. Beginning of the Church-Pentecost-believer's fellowship-Stephen martyred (Acts 1-8)
2. Persecution of the church-Saul's conversion-Peter's vision (Acts 8-12)
3. Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 12-14)
4. Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15)
5. Paul's second and third missionary journeys - Paul and Silas in jail (Acts 15-20)
6. Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and sent to Rome (Acts 21-26)

### **1. Bible Study Acts 2**

*Ask one person in your group to be the recorder/reporter.*

*Read the Bible verses out loud. Read the verses a second time silently.*

*Prayerfully answer the following questions. You should have 5-6 responses for each question. During the large group time the recorder/reporter will summarize the Bible story and share the answers to the questions.*

**What is God doing in these verses? Underline**

**What did the people of faith do? Squiggly line**

**What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?**

**Acts 1:6-8** 6So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ 7He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

**Acts 2:14-24** But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

20 The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

22 ‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—  
23this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

**2:38-47** 38Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ 40And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ 41So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. 42They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.



## 2. Bible Study Acts 10

**What is God doing in these verses?**

**What did the people of faith do?**

**What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?**

**Acts 10** In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called.<sup>2</sup> He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God.<sup>3</sup> One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, 'Cornelius.'<sup>4</sup> He stared at him in terror and said, 'What is it, Lord?' He answered, 'Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.'<sup>5</sup> Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter;<sup>6</sup> he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.'<sup>7</sup> When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him,<sup>8</sup> and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

<sup>9</sup> About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.<sup>10</sup> He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance.<sup>11</sup> He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners.<sup>12</sup> In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air.<sup>13</sup> Then he heard a voice saying, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'<sup>14</sup> But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.'<sup>15</sup> The voice said to him again, a second time, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.'<sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

<sup>17</sup> Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate.<sup>18</sup> They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there.<sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Look, three men are searching for you.'<sup>20</sup> Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.'<sup>21</sup> So Peter went down to the men and said, 'I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?'<sup>22</sup> They answered, 'Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.'<sup>23</sup> So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him.<sup>24</sup> The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.<sup>25</sup> On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshipped him.<sup>26</sup> But Peter made him get up, saying, 'Stand up; I am only a mortal.'<sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled;<sup>28</sup> and he said to them, 'You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean.'<sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?'

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius replied, 'Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me.'<sup>31</sup> He said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God."<sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea."<sup>33</sup> Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.'



34 Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup>but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup>You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup>That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup>We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup>but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup>He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’

44 While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup>for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ <sup>48</sup>So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

### 3. Bible Study Acts 16

**What is God doing in these verses?**

**What did the people of faith do?**

**What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?**

**Acts 16:16-40** 16 One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' <sup>18</sup>She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the authorities. <sup>20</sup>When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews <sup>21</sup>and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. <sup>24</sup>Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. <sup>27</sup>When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' <sup>29</sup>The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' <sup>31</sup>They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' <sup>32</sup>They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. <sup>34</sup>He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

35 When morning came, the magistrates sent the police, saying, 'Let those men go.' <sup>36</sup>And the jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, 'The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace.' <sup>37</sup>But Paul replied, 'They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves.' <sup>38</sup>The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; <sup>39</sup>so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there, they departed.

# A Five-Step *How To* Process for Discerning Your Congregation's Guiding Principles



## 1. What are Guiding Principles?

Guiding Principles are (See p. 90, *Living Lutheran*):

- Directly related to the biblical values of Jesus and God's vision for the church in mission
- Only meaningful in context of God's purpose
- Articulated in ways that will be helpful in making decisions on the journey
- Clear enough and few enough to be helpful
- Ideals to which the community agrees to be held accountable. They may conflict with current practice.

\*Guiding Principles articulate the things we need to remember and be accountable for in living out our purpose. (p. 67, *Living Lutheran*)

\*A congregation with a purpose and Guiding Principles must live them out by engaging the world around it. (p. 81, *Living Lutheran*)

\*When something comes along that distracts you from your purpose, you now have a reason to say, "no." But when God sends an opportunity to be the bearer of a "kingdom moment," you also have the clarity to help you say, "yes." (p. 82, *Living Lutheran*)

## 2. Review Purpose Statement in depth

Talk about what each phrase means.

Talk about what each word means.

What new behaviors are required to be faithful to your purpose statement?

## 3. Pray to be open to God's will and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that the **Holy Spirit** is mentioned over 40 times in the book of Acts, more than any other book of the Bible? The Holy Spirit is critical in the development of the Church, back then and also today. **Pray to be open to God's will and the movement of the Holy Spirit** in your decisions about Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principles:

- Are written in the present tense
- Are claimed as a desired behavior/a way of acting
- Require a specific way of acting- act like God is watching and Jesus is sitting next to you

Review your notes from Acts 2, 10, 16. In small groups, re-read Acts 2, 10, 16 and dig even deeper into the text, seeking biblical guiding principles/core values. Write your answer to these questions on newsprint.

What major decisions/choices did people of faith make?

What values or principles were they using to make those decisions?

Make a list of all the key values you see in action. Do not rank. Discuss.

Make a list of five most important biblical values.

Have each group share their five.

Post the small lists of Guiding Principles.

## 4. Silently pray for 10 minutes. Reflect on the small group's lists of Guiding Principles.

Negotiate from the three lists, the congregation's five Guiding Principles.

## 5. Celebrate your new guiding principles.

Based on *Living Lutheran: Renewing Your Congregation*, by the Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert and adapted by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Skow-Anderson

## Alternate Guiding Principles (Core Values) Process

**Step 1:** Prayerfully consider the following. What is God's will for your congregation? Consider what God might want for your congregation, not what you want.

**Step 2:** Rate each of the Guiding Principles/Core Values below from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important and 5 the most important.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| __1. Bible-centered preaching/teaching            | __13. Community outreach  |
| __2. Every member engaged in ministry             | __14. Strong Christ-centered families   |
| __3. Weekly worship                               | __15. Keep up with cultural changes   |
| __4. Care for the poor                            | __16. Love for our neighbors  |
| __5. Creative, innovative new ministries          | __17. Friendly fellowship   |
| __6. Global missions                              | __18. Working for peace and justice   |
| __7. Evangelism                                   | __19. Faithful service in church and community                                |
| __8. Healing ministries-health and wholeness      | __20. Giving/tithing  |
| __9. Daily prayer                                 | __21. Inviting others come to know and love Jesus through children's ministry |
| __10. A well-kept facility                        | __23. Baptism- Holy Communion   |
| __11. Regular Bible study-growing adult disciples | __24. Everyone is welcome   |
| __12. Care of creation; stewardship of the earth  | __25. Financial stability   |
|   | __26. Maintaining traditions  |

**Step 3:** \*Star the top five Guiding Principles/Core Values.

**Step 4:** Share the top five Core Values with others at your table.

**Step 5:** List the top five Core Values at your table.

**Step 6:** Share your top five Core Values with the large group.

**Step 7:** Come to consensus about your congregation's five Guiding Principles or Core Values.

### **Defining Core Values or Guiding Principles**

1. Core Values are constant.
2. Core Values are passionate.
3. Core Values are biblical.
4. Core Values are core beliefs.

### **The Importance of Guiding Principles/Core Values**

1. Values drive the ministry.
2. Values communicate what's important.
3. Values affect the church's overall behavior.
4. Values inspire people to action.
5. Values help people embrace positive change.
6. Values contribute to ministry success.

