

Where is God calling Elim into our community?



BACKGROUND

At our congregational meeting last January we adopted a proposal to explore what mission and ministry God is calling the people of Elim to embrace. We were invited to a discussion of how to discern this through a time of listening to God, to each other and to our community. Each of us was also encouraged to recommit our own involvement in the life of Elim through worshiping, learning, serving and giving.

Over the past year a small group has met on a regular basis. Our purpose has been to discuss this and work towards discerning God's direction for the mission and ministry of Elim. Input has been shared with the congregation through newsletter articles, an ongoing display, and on our website.

We have listened to God by being in prayer together in our discernment meetings, in our personal prayer times, and in our Sunday worship. Our monthly prayer service in August focused on God's vision for us as we listened for God's voice through prayer, Scripture reading and song.

We have listened to each other. During Sunday fellowship time that month we had guided conversations about the ideas being brought forth from the small group. The four areas that were discussed included:

1. Generating respite care for families and patients in hospice, exploring ways to support the ill and dying and their caregivers.
2. Sharing our land as a place of healing and prayer by creating a community garden, a labyrinth/healing garden, and spiritual walkway.
3. Building caring relationships with military families of our community, seeking to serve them and make their transitions more joyous and peaceful.
4. Listening to the needs of the homeless and hungry, pursuing ways to meet their needs of home, food and friendship.

We have listened to our community by attending the City Council meetings on homelessness; participating in the volunteer orientation for the Coffee Oasis ministry with homeless and at-risk youth; attending the Lutheran Community Services luncheon which gave the story of what they do; and being involved in the Severe Weather Shelter volunteer training. We have also had guest speakers who shared about possibilities for reaching out to the homeless in our community as well as developing a community garden.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

We have learned that part of the key to doing mission is to notice a need. Out of the four areas that were originally looked at, we saw two “bubble to the top.” The ones that addressed meeting the needs of the homeless and hungry and developing our property to be used as a community garden and a prayer labyrinth were the ones people seemed to be most passionate and excited to support.

We believe that this is where God is calling us to use our gifts and resources in being God’s presence of love and grace in our community. We see our mission as: **to aid in ending hunger and homelessness, both locally and in the world.** Our ministry would be the activities we do to support this mission focus, most of which would be on meeting the local needs.

Sharing of stories by team members

To implement this plan, we are proposing the creation of a team of people to develop the actual ministry plan. This team would have an initial meeting on Sunday, Feb. 26, during fellowship time. We have formed a list of suggested ideas to stimulate and continue the conversation.

Local ministries to support this mission:

Food on the First – to continue a focused ministry of gathering food donations for Helpline

- Purchase reusable bags (grant money may be available for this)
- Contact Helpline re: monthly focus items

Community Garden – to develop and create a garden to help supplement needs of Helpline and others

- Develop garden plan (1-year, 3-year, 5-year)
- Contact Helpline re: what foods to grow
- Explore grant possibilities and submit applications
- Create name for garden and make sign
- Address water issues

Homeless community – to create tangible ways to meet needs of those who have no home

- Assemble LifePax for congregational members to distribute
- Provide monthly meal or week of snacks at Coffee Oasis
- Encourage and support involvement in Severe Weather Shelter
- Encourage and support involvement in city council panel on homelessness
- Encourage and support development of ongoing emergency shelter in Port Orchard
- Encourage and support involvement in Coffee Oasis youth ministry

Family Kitchen – to explore ways to build on our ministry with the hungry

- How can this be expanded to provide meals every day?
- How to get more churches/groups involved?
- Would First Lutheran be willing/able to handle increased meals?

Global ministry to support this mission:

- Do world hunger devotional calendar for given period of time (i.e. Lent/Advent)
- Have Sunday education time focus on world hunger issues (adult/youth)
- Continue to encourage giving to international appeals, such as the ELCA World Hunger Appeal, ELCA Good Gifts, and Heifer International.

Here are we – send us!

a proposal from the Mission Discernment Team

Believing that God is on the move among us:

We, the people of God at Elim Lutheran Church, have heard the call to follow God and be a light in our community;

We have intentionally listened to God in prayer and worship; to each other in discussions; and to our community through conversations;

God has touched our hearts and opened our eyes to see the ever-growing need of the hungry and homeless around us;

God has given us the resources of time, energy, finances, and a passion to meet those needs;

We, as the faith community gathered at Elim Lutheran Church, embrace our mission to be to aid in ending hunger and homelessness, both locally and globally, and to develop a ministry that supports that mission.

Mission Discernment Team *(includes people who have attended at least one meeting)*

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