

Concordia Lutheran Church

Wilmington, DE

Intentional Interim Process (IIP)

At the strong encouragement of District representatives and our former pastor, Concordia decided to engage the services on an Intentional Interim Pastor as part of our Strategic Ministry Action Plan. Our former pastor had served Concordia for 25 years and an “interim season” was recommended to help the congregation both look back and look forward in preparation for a “new beginning” in our mission and ministry with the calling of our next pastor.

After a lengthy search process, the Reverend David Betzner, a trained Intentional Interim, was installed at Concordia in March of 2007. Pastor Betzner’s charge was to maintain our existing Word and Sacrament and pastoral care ministries, as well as facilitate dialog among the congregation leading us through the Intentional Interim Process. This proven process assisted the congregation in coming to terms with our history, affirming our mission and ministry identity as it was revealed to us through SMP, addressing leadership and decision making concerns, and making personal commitments to our new leadership and direction.

Again, over 100 members participated in three series of small group discussions. The following three documents are the summaries of these discussions. Phase 1 dealt primarily with looking back in celebrating where Concordia is strong, and honestly discussing where we have fallen short. Phase 2 addressed a series of polarities that were revealed to us through SMP and Phase 1 of IIP. Through guided imagery, Phase 3 helped each participant reflect on his or her own personal commitment to our future.

The IIP summaries affirm some results of SMP, but also break new ground and offer new revelation. The IIP also touched our members at an emotional level beyond that of SMP. The Intentional Interim Process further helped our members evaluate: who we are, where are we going, and how are we going to get there and encouraged us to make personal commitments to, and take ownership of, our mission and ministry to help advance it according to the leading, and purpose, of God.

July 23, 2007

RE: Intentional Interim Process Report
Task I – History

It is the responsibility of the Intentional Interim Process (IIP) Steering Committee to report to the members of Concordia the observations and learning's gathered from the seven meetings on history attended by approximately 100 people. Keep in mind that these are in no particular order. Also, the things highlighted here represent the views of a measurable number of participants.

Concordia members celebrate that they are friendly, caring and welcoming.

Concordia congregation celebrates her ministry of serving others through a variety of ministries including Emmanuel Dining Room, Orphan Grain Train, and Sojourner's Place.

Concordia congregation makes plans but often does not follow through (spiritual gifts, organ project, computers).

Concordia gives thanks for the ministry of David Mueller (pastoral care, Gospel preaching and leadership) and grieves his absence.

Concordia congregation needs to focus on outreach, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with neighbors, new Christians, ethnic groups, young adults and families.

Concordia congregation plateaued a number of years ago in numbers, spiritual growth, and worship style. Many are comfortable with this situation but a good number of others are unhappy with it and want more challenge and opportunity in these areas.

Concordia congregation gives thanks for the youth ministry here and those who facilitate it, Marty and John.

Concordia congregation is thankful for the ministry of its staff John, David, Judy, Marty, Helen and Fred, and its strong lay leadership.

Concordia congregation is pained by earlier conflicts between staff members and Pastor and members.

Concordia congregation has tension: needs/ wants to grow and change and not sure how or if it wants to grow and change in worship style, outreach efforts, and attracting young families.

Concordia congregation is aging and needs to continue to care for that population while it embraces the challenges of the future including changes in leadership, worship and outreach.

Concordia struggles with whether it wants to be a pastor driven church or a mission driven church, and how to get members to take ownership/responsibility for her ministry.

Concordia desires unity in diversity, not uniformity, and is troubled by the tension, gossip and conflict in her midst.

This brings to an end the history phase of the Intentional Interim Process. This phase has provided an opportunity for people of Concordia to speak out about issues and situations related to her previous history. Now it is time to move on, to let go and to look to the future of mission and ministry at Concordia. Opportunity to speak out was given, those things are now in the past, we must let go and move on as directed by our Lord through confession and absolution. Certainly, these learnings can inform us about how we face the future in our ministry together as we continue or strengthen those things that we value, correct those things which have detracted from our ministry and set a new course to speak to some of the needs and wants discovered through this process.

Again, we thank you for your participation and encourage you to continue to pray for Concordia in this process and invite you to participate in the next two phases of the Intentional Interim Ministry. Details of the second set of meetings “Discovering A New Identity” have already been announced. These will followed by the third and last phase of the process “Commitment to New Directions in Ministry.”

Sincerely in Christ,

Wayne Blancett
IIP Committee Chair

Intentional Interim Process
Concordia, Wilmington
Phase 2 Report
New Identity, Leadership Change and Judicatory Linkage

The second phase of Intentional Interim process at Concordia is complete with this report. Participation was not as complete as the first phase, however, the excitement and initiative of those participating yielded much that will influence the changing and new identity of Concordia as it moves closer to the time when she will call her new spiritual leader.

The 2 hour (sometimes a little more) workshops, 4 in all with a participation of about 70 people, focused on things individual and corporate. Going in, there was a sense that we needed a renewed understanding of our individual calling and commitment, before we could look at our “calling” together and how we might pursue it.

The first section of the workshop used the words of Jeremiah 1:4-10 to focus on our “call” during this interim time at Concordia.

The key word that rose to the top was “trust.” From there trust went in two directions toward God and each other. In particular, trust in God meant his use of the interim process, the particular gifts he’s given me, and speaking the words he puts in my mouth. Trusting each other had the same source, our Lord, but understanding the same things about others as I understand about myself in this process. That is trust that God is using others in this process as well as myself, that others are gifted and speaking the truth in love.

People felt that lack of trust in God and each other because of our own fears, or impatience, or rigidity, or previous hurt would undermine God’s purpose and our oneness in Christ our Lord.

After the first session of the workshop we changed the second section to give members a chance to speak the words “God has put in their mouth” using five categories or statement starters. The most common answers we got to the questions speak the mind of the congregation fairly consistently with what the committee heard after the first phase of the Intentional Interim Process. They invite us to an identity which is changing and growing through this time. The questions and the answers we received follow:

1. If I were in charge here I would? Remember and keep in mind that God’s in charge. Celebrate our common ground and unity in Christ. Reach out to young families and young adults. Reach out to the entire community.
2. If I could change or accomplish one thing here it would be? We follow through on decisions. Members take more ownership of our ministry together. We grow in faith and numbers. We behave as one knowing there are differences among us.

3. If I could put a stop to one thing it would be? Negativity. Resistance. The expectation that a new pastor can (will) come and fix everything.
4. My prayer for Concordia is... I pray for growth in spirit and numbers. I pray for a pastor who will help us grow in spirit and numbers. My prayer is for our legacy of involvement and contributions to continue. I pray for unity among us.
5. Complete a newspaper headline “Concordia.....!” Concordia is open to everyone. Concordia seeks decision with Christ at the center. Concordia embraces, moves into the future.

The third section of the workshop had a particular focus on the role of the interim asking, “In what ways can the interim pastor be of help toward hearing God’s call?” and “What does our church need to hear from our interim pastor?”

In summary 4 things are worthy of sharing here because they stood out in the sessions. The interim pastor needs to continue to “speak the truth in love.” He needs to guide, educate and clarify. He needs to build bridges and mediate. He needs to challenge toward change and growth.

The second session of the workshop focused on the “process” words in Ephesians 4:11-16, “building up,” “attain to unity,” “to maturity,” “grow up,” and “body’s growth.” This passage was chosen because these words imply change and growth and renewal, all of which call for “new identity,” a particularly important part of Phase 2 of the Intentional Interim Process. Here the workshop participants were offered four polarities and challenged to provide insights as to how these polarities might be managed differently at Concordia, resulting in a new or changed identity. The realization is that these polarities will never go away but managing/understanding them in a new way will result in some of the changes in Concordia’s identity that have surfaced in the SMP, the History phase of the Intentional Interim Process and in other formats for a number of years. As you will see from reading the following, some significant conversation took place about what might help Concordia grow up and into the people of God she desires to become. In other words, working on these things will enable, focus, grow and change mission/ministry at Concordia consistent with our understanding of God’s purpose at this time and into the immediate future.

In order to give you a better understanding of the format, the polarities are presented here in exactly the same way they were available at the workshop with a summary of the results. They are presented in no particular order.

I. Tension/conflict.....Peace

- a. How do you believe Jesus would want us to deal with this issue at Concordia?
- b. What would help Concordia with this issue?
- c. As a child of God what might be your role in this?

Participants believed this reality would continue as conflict/peace tension are part of life in congregations too. People felt that conflict should be dealt with rather than avoided. That an effort should be made to clarify the issues. That speaking the truth in love was very important. All voices should be heard. In fact, all of this should be handled in the context of Christian love evident here at Concordia (patience, understanding, listening, collaborate and reach out).

However, there was a consensus that our mission/ministry should move forward and not be held hostage by those who do not agree or who might have hurts that can't be healed through the use of prayer, conversation and forgiveness.

II. Mission Driven.....Pastor Driven

- a. Up to now do you see Concordia as a Mission Driven or Pastor Driven congregation? Why?
- b. How would you prefer it to be in the future? Why?
- c. What difference would it make as you understand the difference?

Many were quickly engaged by this polarity and groups had different perspectives on the answer. Some said Concordia was mission driven and some said pastor driven, and some said we started as one and finished as the other, but all said it was a great polarity for understanding the difference and being clear about which we want to be in the future.

In a mission driven congregation the mission drives the ministry which is owned by the people and the pastor helps the people accomplish the mission. In a pastor driven congregation the pastor decides and guides and the people assist him in accomplishing the mission. That is very simplistic you understand.

People were thankful to have a chance to reflect on this polarity, to get a better understanding of the difference and to have a chance to speak their mind about what they preferred in the future

The consensus was that Concordians wanted to own the ministry here and maintain a balance in this polarity as they proceed to the calling of a new spiritual leader.

- III. OutreachService
- a. What's the difference between outreach and service?
 - b. What needs to happen for Concordia to be more outreach focused/ oriented inside?
 - c. Why are we afraid of outreach or what puts us off about it?
 - d. What can you do to help make this happen (that we become outreach focused inside?)

Again, for conversational purposes this discussion proved valuable. You can define the difference between the two in a number of ways but for our purposes we used the following: Outreach results in membership growth and opportunities to disciple others in worship and service. Service meets the physical needs of others and builds relationship with Christ but usually does not result in membership growth.

There was a good bit of anxiety around this discussion because we are very much more comfortable serving the physical needs of others than we are sharing our faith in Christ with them and inviting them to participate in mission/ministry in this place. Serving somehow involves less risk than sharing and inviting.

Specific answers to questions b., c., and d., were limited but included some of the following:

We could use a training or discipling program at Concordia.
We need to get the word out about our congregation and it's joyful worship services and it's welcoming spirit.
This will take a financial commitment.
We need to risk taking on our fears and challenge ourselves more for significant and consistent outreach to happen.

IV. Plateaued.....Growing

The SMP goals speak of removing roadblocks to spiritual growth and spreading the Gospel (outreach) and the first phase of the IIP indicated that Concordia had plateaued in worship style. So, the committee designed a polarity around that, plateaued and growing, in three specific areas worship, spiritual growth and outreach. They designed three questions to help us look at the specifics as follows:

- a. What roadblocks need to be removed for change to take place?
- b. What would you change in these areas to help growth happen?
- c. What will it cost for this to happen and are you willing to pay the price for the sake of the Gospel?

These are presented in paragraph form: one paragraph on roadblocks, another on change and the last on cost because there are many duplications.

Inertia, fear of change, resistance to change and we got too comfortable were presented as reasons why worship, spiritual growth and outreach had not grown. Under worship “the preference for traditional formats on the part of some” was given as a roadblock to new and different. Roadblocks to spiritual growth were time, we weren’t challenged and lack of full pastoral involvement. Roadblocks to outreach were fear, Lutherans don’t go door to door, and that’s the Evangelism Committee’s job.

The second question “what needs to change for growth to happen in these areas yielded the following results.

Changes in worship would include providing education on the importance and purpose of variety. Another suggestion indicated using a variety of groups and ages in our worship presentations. One group suggested providing clear information as to what to expect in worship (no surprises). One question wondered how we would/could measure whether these changes were working. Trying other services and format was encouraged.

Changes suggested to encourage movement in spiritual growth included more involvement on the part of the pastor, use a survey to gather information about this, bring in some outside leaders and engaging topics, and vary the length of the offerings so people didn’t feel saying yes meant forever.

Changes suggested for outreach to be more important and evident at Concordia included providing alternative worship opportunities, provide training and educate toward outreach being owned and taken seriously by everyone.

The third question, “What will it cost for this to happen and are you willing to pay the price for the sake of the Gospel?” received the following responses.

People felt if we changed worship too much we might lose some members. A number thought if we educated the congregation it would help reduce the trauma and help with understanding. A number of these things will mean more volunteers to execute them. Some suggested we need to let go of or expand our comfort zone.

The costs for growing in our spiritual growth effort would be time, desire and money. Learn and employ new methods of teaching. Offer an engaging list of topics and some guest leaders.

The costs for growing our outreach efforts would include time, education and stepping outside our comfort zone.

In closing, we asked participants to suggest other polarities that they felt we needed to look at with some seriousness in the not too distant future. Those are simply listed below. The committee would be glad to hear from you about others.

Other polarities!

Aging population.....Young families
Operating budget.....Capital funding

Thanks to the Intentional Interim Steering Committee who have shepherded this process to this point, chaired by Wayne Blancett and to all those who participated. Look for information on Phase 3 coming soon.

David Betzner, Interim Pastor
September 8, 2007

November 8, 2007

**RE: Intentional Interim Process Phase 3 Report
Commitment to New Directions and New Leadership**

Dear brother and sisters in Christ:

In our recent meeting of the Steering Committee, Pastor Betzner coordinated our review of the recorded notes from all 4 sessions of Phase 3. Our goal was to eliminate duplications of comments, clarify remarks and be certain we included the prevailing input of participants. This report is an effort to give you an overview of all the sessions and an appreciation of what was spoken and learned.

Therefore, I feel it is important to give those members of the congregation who did not attend the Phase 3 sessions some insight into how each session was conducted. Each session was started with devotion and prayer by Pastor Betzner.

He then read the key passage *Matthew 10:5-14*.

“These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you proclaim the good news, ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.”

- Each participant was then asked to underline the key phrases of this Scripture. This gave the participants more insight into the instructions which Jesus gave his disciples.
- Pastor Betzner then very skillfully and effectively led the participants in a guided imagery meditation to another place and time – namely to a hillside in the Holy Land in the time of Christ. We were asked to imagine that we encountered Jesus and what we would have said to him. Most of the participants later expressed this as a positive experience.
- For the benefit of members who did not attend a Phase 3 session, we felt that including the following words that Pastor Betzner used in the guided imagery meditation would be informative and enlightening. We hope that each of you can experience it and go through the process yourselves for learning or understanding about what it means on all our parts to be getting ready for a new pastor.

GUIDED IMAGERY FOR MEDITATION

- Imagine that you are sitting alone on a hill. What is the season? What are the colors around you? The weather? The sounds? The smells? (pause)
- You look down from where you are sitting and notice a group forming below you. One in the group begins to talk to others. You sit very still, hoping that you will not be noticed. As you begin to listen to what is being said, you realize that it is Jesus talking to this group. As you listen and look more intently, you begin to recognize some of the people below. They are members of the congregation! Whom do you recognize? Why do you suppose they are there? (pause)
- You listen carefully. Jesus is commissioning these disciples, and he says something to them about what they are called to do as a church in this interim time. What does Jesus say? What are your reactions to his words? What are your feelings as you survey the scene? (pause)
- As you continue to look down, you realize that Jesus has stopped talking. He has turned around and he is looking up at you. He smiles, and even from this distance you can see much compassion in his eyes. And then, he begins to walk up the path towards you. What are your feelings as he approaches you? Do you stand and walk towards him or do you sit and wait where you are? (pause)
- Finally, the two of you are face to face. He smiles and reaches out his hand. Before he has a chance to say anything, you blurt out that you have heard what he has said to the others and tell him what you think your role is as a disciple at this time in the life of your church. What do you say to him? What does Jesus say in response? (pause)
- You begin to feel comfortable talking with Jesus, enough to share with him the emotions you are feeling about the arrival of a new pastor. What are the emotions you share with Him? Reluctance? Eagerness? Fear? Do you desire to pray with him for guidance? (pause)
- Jesus is fully there listening to you, standing before you. He is looking at you, lovingly and humbly. See him looking at you as he has taken in your words. And then he responds once again. He asks you what you need to let go of so that the movement towards the future can happen. What dust do you need to shake off from your feet? What do you say in response? (pause)
- He receives what you say and tells you that, in the telling, you have shaken off the dust. He blesses you and turns to walk down the path once again. You remain where you are for awhile sitting quietly to take in all that has just happened. And then, you get up and walk towards the future.

Thus the analysis of the passage from Matthew, the guided imagery and meditation set the stage to tackle answering the nine written questions that were distributed. Each person was asked to make a written response to each question. We then paired off and shared responses on a one-to-one basis. The group reassembled, and a composite of the responses was recorded.

For your information the nine questions and the composite responses follows:

- 1. What was this experience like for you?** *Relaxing, peaceful, thought provoking....enlightening, introspective*
- 2. What did you discover/learn about yourself?** *Clarifies relationship, confirmed participation no matter what, growth in relationship to God, apprehensive*
- 3. What did you discover about what it means to be commissioned as a disciple?** *Empowerment, privilege/responsibility, ownership, anxiety, cooperation, focus on goal (Christ's perspective). Chesterton: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It's been difficult and not tried"*
- 4. What do you need from others to help you disciple in this place?** *Give and receive encouragement, open acceptance of ideas, direction-training-job description, accountability, articulate needs*
- 5. What do you want to give to others to help them disciple in this place?** *Some said the same as number 4. Prayer, personal invitation, nothing is impossible with Christ (assurance), cooperation, consideration, management*
- 6. How will you express your commitment to ministry?** *Open to change, active participation, involvement - youth and young adults too, know and use your spiritual gifts, availability, personal growth necessary*
- 7. What did you discover about the mission for the church at this time?** *Share the good news, ready to grow in spirit and numbers, try new things, pursue radio opportunities, move forward, need more clarity on the difference between outreach and service*
- 8. How do we prepare for new pastoral leadership?** *Pray, let go of the past, understand ourselves, understand it is God's call, speak the truth in love, have open hearts and minds, unity, patience*
- 9. What can be your personal role in all of this?** *Be active, listen/communicate, ownership, pray for the call, the congregation and the new pastor, tune in to pastor's needs, understand boundaries (be clear about who is responsible for what is done in any given situation)*

Pastor Betzner brought each session to a close by giving each participant a commitment opportunity. He requested each person to make one written commitment to our ministry at Concordia and place it in a "Basket of Pledges." He encouraged us to be as specific as possible in describing the commitment. The response was excellent.

We wish to share with you a few of the written commitments that participants submitted in order to give you some appreciation of the degree of involvement, dedication and commitment expressed by all the participants. You will note that some commitments were quite specific by stating planned actions while others dealt more in generalities. All submitted pledges were of value to our ministry at Concordia.

- *Lead Bible study and teach Sunday School wherever there is need*
- *Visit the sick and their caregivers*
- *Visit shut-ins*
- *Invite others to participate in Advent Devotional (an expression of faith)*
- *Look into possible radio ministry*
- *Pray everyday for the spiritual health/growth of Concordia*
- *Be more involved, volunteer to usher (first step)*
- *Commit to offering more support to our service ministries and provide music to aid in calming people's hearts*
- *Help with Call Committee. Help new pastor learn history of Concordia, work with pastor and others to define Mission and Ministry*
- *Reach out to folks in informal ways and minister to their needs (as well as praying for them)*
- *Accept changes that will come with a new pastor and support same and learn about Call Process*
- *Would like help in being more involved at Concordia, need guidance and with prayer will try to fill the need*
- *Listen, participate and encourage others to participate*
- *Pray for Call Committee, pastor to be and congregants regularly*

This concludes our report to the congregation on Phase 3.

The Steering Committee wishes to thank all members who attended all or any of the 3 phases. We felt it was important that people had the opportunity to express their thoughts and have some impact on the future of our ministry at Concordia.

We also wish to express our gratitude to Pastor Betzner for his leadership, effort and direction.

I believe I can speak for the entire Steering Committee in giving thanks for this opportunity to serve our Lord as we walked together on our journey in faith.

Sincerely in Christ,

Wayne Blancett
IIP Steering Committee Chairman

Committee Members: Karen Blach, Wayne Blancett, Sharon Cornell, Susan Fuesler, Denise Gray, Jason Stoehr, John Hetrick, George Butler