



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

FALL 2019



Kim Daht Photography

becoming the Center for a Better Life

Read this first paragraph, then close your eyes. Imagine it's the year 2022. You walk into Messiah Church. A group is gathered talking outside. You enter the building, and the sun is streaming in on some faces you recognize and some you don't. Children dart around the corner, laughing. Over the vibrant buzz of conversation, you hear music. Someone shakes your hand, someone else wraps you in a hug. Excitement fills the air and you can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. You realize it's not even Sunday morning — yet Messiah Church is filled with people from within the community who are coming together to grow, to care for each other, and to serve.

Messiah's 2022 Strategic Plan

Imagining that future, and figuring out how we make that vision a reality has been the prayerful task of a dedicated group of Messiah Church members who are part of the Messiah 2022 Strategy Team. They first met after Messiah surveyed the congregation to learn what desires and needs existed within the church. The group refined those ideas to draft a 3-year plan to share with the congregation.

A 3-year planning process forces groups to think about the future and ensures that today's actions keep

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them on the path to realizing that future. It grounds decision-making and helps prioritize everyone's ideas within the available resources of people, money and time.

"From the outset, there was consensus that we need to be a church that welcomed everybody — that was assumed to be a statement that defined who we will be," says Messiah Senior Pastor Steve Richards.

Research shows that 22% of the US population attends church regularly; 27% identify as agnostic, atheist or have no interest in church; and 6% associate with a religion other than Christianity. That leaves 45% of the population that identifies as Christians but have no church.

"We recognize that we live in a post-Christian culture. Most people in America do not have a church — even though most would consider themselves a Christian," Pastor Steve says. "What if we could be the church — or the community — for 45% of the population who don't have a church? They love Jesus — they just don't like the church, or their impression of the church is not one with which they connect. They have needs, dreams, hopes and desires just like those of us who are at church."

Knowing that Christians who go to church share similar needs and dreams with those who don't have a church home, and wanting to wrap our arms around our community in a bigger way, led to our Messiah 2022 Strategic Goal:

Messiah Church will be identified as a place that invests in the lives of people (including the next generation) in our community by providing growth, care and serving opportunities.

This strategic goal is an extension of — or a way to deliver on — Messiah's Brand Promise: *At Messiah, we make life better.* Messiah would become the Center for a Better Life.

"Just as Interfaith Outreach is the one-stop-shop for people in the area who have economic challenges, what if Messiah Church is the one-stop-shop for people who want a better life?" Pastor Steve asks. "I think everyone wants a better life. Let's be the place that helps people be better at relationships, better parents, better with their finances..."

Including the Next Generation

The “next generation” isn’t *just* the children — although Messiah Church has consistently demonstrated their heart for the children in the church and in the community. It’s also about the next generation of people. The strategic goal acknowledges the need to build valuable programming today that also enables Messiah to contribute to a vibrant community of tomorrow.

“It’s easy to say it’s all about me, but we always need to be concerned about what we’re doing for the next generation,” says Pastor Steve.



Linda Seaton

To do that requires that we continue to listen to the needs that exist in the community — like we did with our initial connection with Oakwood Elementary School and the evolution of the Bloom Totes for Hope program. The plan includes tactics to help uncover services currently available in the community, which will impact where we focus our efforts within the community.

“Part of our journey is to figure out what is needed, so we can begin to offer that — not because the next step is to start attending worship, because that is back to ‘what I need’ — but because we love our neighbor where they are,” says Pastor Steve.

Providing Growth, Care and Serving Opportunities

Being the Center for a Better Life is the over-arching goal, and the planning team developed four additional focus areas out of the input and ideas that were shared by the congregation: Communication, Children & Families, Youth, and Serving & Servants. As the focus areas came together, the group noticed that the Messiah Staff was already aligned that way.

“It all started coming together so well — it fit like a glove. If this isn’t the Holy Spirit working...” says Barb Kula, Messiah Church member who facilitated the Strategic Plan working sessions and continues to serve in a project management role. The Strategic Plan lays the groundwork for how we build upon programs that work today to be more inclusive of the community — and how we add to those successes with programming that helps everyone fill gaps in their lives.

Communications – We want everyone to know what’s happening at Messiah. We need to tailor messages so they resonate with everyone who reads them, are clear and concise, and are delivered in multiple formats. Offering new tools like a Messiah App and “TED Talks” can help us all stay more connected with each other. Elevating our presence in the community will help everyone associate Messiah Church with activities that will help them live a better life.

Children & Families – We want Messiah to be a magnet for kids and their families, to strengthen families and their link to God. We will build on the successes of Art Camp and the Oakwood School partnership, offering more programs in community venues. Offering speakers and programs on issues that impact families (like sibling rivalry and stress) will help everyone in the community. We want kids to feel comfortable and welcome, so kid-chosen colors and appealing decor will be added to the atrium and children’s area downstairs.

Youth – We want youth to know that there are caring adults who support them — and that Messiah is a safe, welcoming, friendly space for all youth. We will show up for the youth in our community. We will develop relationships with area high schools and middle schools to better understand (and fulfill) their needs, and build on current partnerships like the Wayzata Schools Partners in Prevention, to expand programs that address youth mental health.

Serve – We believe that serving gives each of us a way to practice putting others first and living as true followers of Jesus Christ. In the next three years, everyone will have an opportunity to serve, both in new and ongoing serving ministries, that aligns with their gifts and the needs of the community. Through time serving together, we will serve more people, build new and deeper relationships with each other, and draw closer to Jesus Christ.

Investing in the Lives of People

The Strategy Team put all the ideas within each of these
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A GROWING PARTNERSHIP

Bloom & Messiah COMMUNITY DINNERS



Last summer, Messiah Church was inspired to do our part to fill a gap in food insecurity in our community. As the school year drew to a close, we worked to understand how families are impacted by the loss of free or reduced-price school lunches during the summer months. We realized that some Bloom families have children not only at Bloom, but in local elementary schools... and that, for some of those Bloom families, their food costs skyrocket during the summer as older siblings lose affordable or free lunches.

That led to the launch of our Totes for Hope program in June 2018. Messiah servants packed bags of food that would be left at Bloom for families to take home as needed. The food bags were sincerely appreciated by Bloom families and staff.

“We heard that some families felt guilty about taking a bag because it contained some things that they didn’t need,” says Kami Pohl, Messiah’s Director of Community Engagement.

Surveying the families in the fall revealed that they would prefer to select the specific food items that their family would eat. That led to the food shelf that sits near the entrance to Bloom today. Stocked with food staples and snack items, it’s an easy option for any family. Creating an open food shelf has also allowed Messiah to involve the community in a different way, as servants work to secure donations from businesses and organizations who care.



Mary Tucker and Kay Schultz are two Messiah Church members who feel called to fill a gap of food insecurity for children. Mary says, “I’m a retired teacher, so Bloom’s mission is something I hold dear. I also know that kids go hungry, and it’s not easy for families to stretch their budget. If kids come to school hungry, they can’t learn.”

Mary first became involved with the Totes for Hope program last summer and has experienced the program’s evolution. She saw that it was difficult to provide fresh items regularly because they’re harder to buy in bulk at a low price, store and make available for distribution. The team also knew that fresh produce is important to a healthy diet and expensive for families to buy.

“God nudged me,” Mary says. As a member of a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), Mary had heard that there is sometimes extra produce or families who don’t want their CSA box for a particular week. Mary contacted the CSA to explain Bloom’s mission and asked if any abundance could be shared. Since then, almost every week, there has been an extra box (or 2 or 3) of produce to share with Bloom families. Grateful Bloom children made thank you cards for the farm, which Mary delivered. “The farm owner was delighted to be able to fill the need,” Mary says.

Throughout the community, Mary and Kay have had similar experiences. Kay, who grew up in a family of servants, has two sisters-in-law who work in education. They’ve shared stories of their students’ food needs, and Kay, who Mary calls a “shopper extraordinaire,” sprang into action to support their classrooms. Now, she plays a vital role in securing food for the Bloom food shelf as well. Through her work with the food shelf and health kit packing (among other things), Kay has developed relationships with local stores like Target, Aldi and Costco that help her stretch her dollars. “They help me get creative on how we can stretch coupons, Cartwheel and other deals,” she says. “They will all do whatever they can that’s within their realm of possibility to help us with our mission.”

Mary and Kay are both “abundantly grateful” at the generosity of friends, family and the community for their support. Whether it’s a donation, Village Hearth providing low-cost bread, or the local Walgreens manager applying the rules of a coupon as broadly as possible, the community has responded to fill the shelves with food.

Sharing Meals Together

Throughout the year, Messiah provided special bags to families for the holidays — from a full traditional Thanksgiving meal to bags of snacks for winter break to eggs and an egg dye kit at Easter. These fun items were well-received, and Messiah continued to think about ways to expand the service.

“As we moved back in to summer, we were looking for ways to get more people from Messiah involved,” Kami said. “As we evolved the food shelf, there had been fewer options for people to serve, and we know many at Messiah have a heart for serving Bloom.”

As soon as the idea for hosting evening meals with Bloom families was announced, Messiah responded. “People have just been wanting to help, and we’ve

been blessed to get to add service opportunities to each dinner, splitting shifts, and finding more ‘jobs’ for everyone who wants to help,” Kami says.

Messiah and Bloom have held three Bloom Family dinners this summer. Messiah servants donate food, plastic-ware and their time to create a meal for families. It’s served in Heritage Hall right at pick-up time to make it an easy, convenient opportunity for families. Messiah members and staff eat alongside Bloom staff and families, getting to know each other in a very informal environment.

“The dinners are nice because we don’t usually see the families. This way, we get a chance to meet them,” Kay says. And the families get a chance to connect with other adults while the children eat and do crafts with Messiah servants. Messiah sent meals home with some families who couldn’t stay, giving them an already-prepared meal on a hot summer night.

“We don’t have an ulterior motive, but who knows what ripple effect it might have if we give people one less worry in their lives,” Mary says. “These dinners are a nice next step for us.”

Kay says, “It’s an injustice to think that anyone in a community where I live doesn’t have food... but you never know someone else’s story. The little kids don’t understand paying bills. They just want to be fed when they’re hungry, and we all want to do our part to help fill that need.”

Connecting with Messiah

For Messiah, our service is about being Jesus’ hands and feet in the world, not about receiving attention. To respect the dignity of all families, no one is present at the food shelf, and there is no registration or demonstration of need required. Occasionally, Messiah includes a brief note offering love and prayers to the families in the bags, but this service is about wrapping our arms around the community in the way that Jesus would want. “We can still be their church family whether or not they wind up coming to worship,” Kami says.

For the Friend family, Bloom did lead them to Messiah Church. Eight years ago, they relocated to Plymouth and were lucky to find an opening for their oldest child, Ellery, who is now 8, at Bloom. They began attending Messiah’s community events, like Taste of Messiah. When Ellery went to Oakwood Elementary School, they met the Linman family, who are members of Messiah and invited them to attend services.

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Bloom & Messiah COMMUNITY DINNERS

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“Messiah feels like home to me,” Chris Friend says. “We love it here. It seems like a family, and feels like people know you.”

Chris and his wife, Jessica, immediately liked what Messiah was doing to create community — by establishing and supporting Bloom and working closely with Oakwood. The Friends wanted to support these efforts, so they participate in the Bloom family dinners and other Messiah activities. They are moved by everything Messiah does for the Bloom community.

“I know families appreciate the food. I also think it’s good for my kids to walk by the food shelf and to think about why it’s there,” he says. It’s led to deeper

conversations about food insecurity and serving others. Chris feels that it’s important to get the kids involved with the church — and the Bloom Dinners provide a great way for them to participate in the combined Messiah and Bloom community.

Maven, 6 (now at Oakwood), and Calla, 3, both attended Bloom as well. Chris and Jessica like that the classes are small, and the teachers are well-educated and loving. They had heard, and experienced, that Bloom puts students on the right path as they move to elementary school — and it’s also given them a community of friends! Bloom and Messiah have helped them meet friends who they see again in church activities and community activities like school and gymnastics. It’s made a big community a little smaller.

“In our heart of hearts, Messiah Church is a church that wants to love children — all children in our community, not just those in our church,” Kami says. “People want what’s best for all children.” ●

becoming the Center for a Better Life

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focus areas on paper. It’s a long list! Many of the ideas from within one focus area require involvement from another focus area — serving at Oakwood addresses both Children & Youth and Serving, for example. Since this is a 3-Year-Plan, some ideas can be implemented today, while others won’t start until 2020 or 2021, based on resource availability.

Many groups are already living this vision of Messiah being the Center for a Better Life for those who don’t have a church home. From the 20 children in the community who participated in Art Camp in June, to the Bloom families who enjoy food and fellowship in Heritage Hall, to the residents of RidgePointe who call Messiah their church even though they’ve never set foot in the building but watch online, together, every week, to the growing community of Young at Heart who now fill Heritage Hall with their fellowship...we are already reaching out into the community.

The goal now and for 2022, is to have more programs like this — programs that fill a need in the community and help make life better for us all.

What You Can Do Today

We can all begin to prepare for the future today. When we have more members of the community walking into our building, they need to know that they are welcome — that everyone is welcome. It might be your first thought to connect with your friends at church (and expect them to connect with you). Instead, seek out the person you don’t know.

“I hear quite often from people that the first impression of Messiah is that we’re warm and welcoming. Now we have to take the next step, to be willing to establish relationships. Maybe we think we don’t need another friend, but maybe we would find the best friend ever,” says Pastor Steve. “The next person I meet could change my life.”

In addition, watch for opportunities to participate in Listening Sessions and to share your gifts. Becoming the Center for a Better Life will take the prayers and work of the entire congregation — and be open to where this plan takes us.

“Sometimes we start off on one thing and it may take us to a place we never imagined. We need to be ready when it takes us beyond where we were prepared to go,” says Pastor Steve. “We have an exciting future before us as a church.” ●

VISUAL ARTS AT MESSIAH'S



Children from Messiah participated in a new event this summer — Art Camp! It was a new offering at Messiah in the afternoons after the morning's Vacation Bible School activities. Participants ate lunch at Messiah then headed to Art Camp — or they could attend Art Camp and not VBS. Messiah wanted to offer options to families who have a difficult time picking up their children at noon and needed an afternoon activity. Participants chose two tracks from: Visual Arts, Drama, Drums and Vocal Arts. They spent 90 minutes in each, followed by open play and a movie.

The Visual Arts track was led by Messiah Church members Linda Lohse and Pat Berg. Twenty kids participated in a week of creating African-themed crafts, inspired by the week's VBS theme of *Roar: Life is Wild. God is Good.*

"I don't know who had the most fun — the kids or us!" Linda says.

Pat and Linda didn't know each other before they started preparing for Art Camp together (one attends first service and the other second), but they quickly formed a strong friendship that has continued long after the crafts have dried. Unsure of who would be attending their class beforehand, they chose a variety of projects that could be made successfully by little hand and would also keep the attention of older kids.

"I really enjoyed working with Pat when she and I were developing ideas and showing samples to show each other," Linda says. "We went from having no plan to actually doing projects — and hoping the kids would enjoy them."

Campers first colored a map of Africa, identifying the country of origin for the crafts they were making. They also drew their own world. Some drew continents, others drew dinosaurs and even a "candy land." "The kids really used their creativity



Linda and Pat have ideas for more projects next year — and are thinking about how to use projects like this fabric bowl with others at Messiah.



Campers decorated tie-dyed sashes that they wore in a parade on the last day of camp.

throughout the week," Pat says.

The kids had an opportunity to make a rain-stick, filling long tubes with things like popcorn, rice and sand and then decorating the outside. They made fly whisks (traditionally made with cow's hair and used by people of South Africa to wave flies away) out of crepe paper, ribbons and beads. They decorated tie-died smocks and sashes and made masks, too.

A favorite project was making fabric bowls. "They were so excited to have something to put their treasures in," Linda says.

On the last day of camp there was an exhibition for families. The Visual Arts items were displayed on a table, and campers paraded around the room wearing their tie die creations. "The kids were so excited to show off their projects," Pat says. "We felt so good about the work we put in when we saw the effort the kids put in to their projects."

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VISUAL ARTS AT MESSIAH'S



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Art Camp drew participation not only from Messiah Church but from members of the community who were looking for low-cost, quality, safe care for their children but had never interacted with Messiah before. All the children played and worked together, regardless of whether they'd known each other before. "It was such a good outreach within the local community," Linda says.

Like any first-time endeavor, they already have ideas about how to make next time run even more smoothly. Linda and Pat both encourage anyone interested to sign up for similar opportunities — as a participant, but especially as a servant.

"It was an opportunity for kids to know that are other people in the church who care about them and want to do things with them," Pat says. "And have lots of fun along the way." ●

Make a Difference Day

Save the date for Saturday, October 26 — our annual Make a Difference Day! We'll be deploying servants into the surrounding community to Make a Difference in the lives of our neighbors. Serve as a family, an individual, or with your friends or faith group. There's something for every age & skill level!

Fall Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship Service Times:

8:45 am Traditions Service

10:30 am Journey Contemporary Service

Streaming Live!

Unable to attend in person? Join the 8:45 or 10:30 am service delivered live to your mobile device or home computer. See it for yourself at www.MessiahChurch.org/live.

Available Online

You are one click away from being connected at Messiah. Recorded sermons from Messiah's Sunday Worship Services, the ATM (All Things Messiah) and an up-to-date events calendar are all available online at www.MessiahChurch.org.