

MET Team Report

The Mt. Carmel MET Team was formed late in 2019 to answer the following three questions:

1. Who are we now?
2. What opportunities is God providing us with our neighbors in the community and in the world?
3. What are the characteristics a pastor would need to help us move forward with our vision?

Initially, the MET Team conducted a Congregational Vitality Survey that revealed who we are at Mt. Carmel today.

- We feel strongly that the congregation helps us as individuals connect with God and grow in our personal faith, deepening our relationship with God. Worship nurtures our faith, is joyful and is filled with God's presence.
- Members also feel the congregation as a whole is connected with God, is spiritually vital and has a clear sense of mission and purpose. They also sense that the congregation is focused on doing God's work. They are excited about the future of Mt. Carmel and are willing to try new things.
- We are a congregation that regularly attends worship services, feels connected to the ELCA and the wider Christian church and is regularly involved in prayer, devotions and religious study.
- Mt. Carmel is a close-knit family that supports one another and welcomes visitors.
- We feel the social climate at Mt. Carmel is harmonious with open respect for disagreement and currently has very little tension.
- Many members give of their time, talent and treasure and regularly serve, volunteer and donate. Further, they advocate for justice and feel equipped to share their faith with others.
- We believe that God is present in our daily lives and He is concerned with our well-being and the well-being of each member of Mt. Carmel.
- Members feel Mt. Carmel is sustainable and has sufficient "people power" to continue and grow.

Challenges that the congregation face are:

- Mt. Carmel is an older congregation with a majority of members age 55 or older.
- We recognize that Mt. Carmel does not represent the cross-section of our community.
- Some members desire more opportunities for spiritual growth.
- We recognize the need to explore ways to share our love for God with our neighbors, our community and the world.

In mid-2020, MET Team volunteers conducted personal interviews of 83 MCLC members. These interviews provided considerable insight as to "Who we are now." These interviews revealed the following:

- God has a significant and frequent presence in our daily lives. We feel His presence worshipping together, in nature or simply being with other members of our church. We also feel that God is with us in times of crises, such as dealing with the COVID pandemic, death of a family member or in dealing with a major illness, accident or injury of a loved one.
- Overwhelmingly, members treasure the other members of our congregation, primarily worshipping together or in religious study groups. The friendliness, openness, fellowship, hospitality, support and welcoming spirit at Mt. Carmel are highly prized. Further, we enjoy giving of our time, talent and treasure. We are also very thankful for our caring and reliable staff.
- Members have a strong sense of wanting to share God's love in our community by supporting the local homeless shelter, Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz Church, Vacation Bible School, the Community Concert Series, Inter-Faith programs, Get-on-the Bus, the SLO Food Bank and other local churches charities.

In the summer of 2018, Mt. Carmel was immersed in division and tension. The husband-and-wife ministerial team had a differing vision for the congregation than a majority of the church members. As a result, many church activities, events and programs suffered and were either poorly attended or eliminated altogether. The church declined to a very low level of activity.

Eventually, Turning West, a consulting group with experience in conflict resolution, was engaged to bring the two sides together. Unfortunately, the differences could not be resolved and the pastors resigned. The church council then made a decision to call Pastor Richard Rollefson as interim pastor to hopefully restore some stability, peace and harmony at the church and begin a healing process.

The church council with strong support from the congregation, retained Turning West to help reunite the church and chart a new path forward in fulfilling a shared vision and mission. A series of plans and programs were developed to reduce tension, restore programs and activities and establish a harmonious, healthy environment.

In late 2018 and in 2019, with extensive input from the congregation, new Mission and Vision Statements were adopted. Further, a Strategic Plan was developed for the church with new goals for worship, finances and volunteer leadership. Additionally, a Norms Committee was formed to help create a healthier atmosphere at Mt. Carmel. Their work included guidelines for interacting with one another and principles for functioning as a healthy and respectful church. A Community Building Team was formed to plan and implement new programs and activities to enliven the church. All of these committees and programs added to make Mt. Carmel a more caring and interactive church, willing to respectfully listen to each other.

Thankfully, today Mt. Carmel is in a much better place. We are a much more organized church with strong leadership and active programs including the Stephen Ministry Program and Caring Ministry in our congregation and the SLO Food Bank, Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz, and Homeless Shelter programs in our community, all of which thrived during the COVID Pandemic.

We now share a common vision for the congregation and are anxious to become more involved in the community. A high priority is to attract young families and grow our children and teen programs. We wish to grow the Lutheran Campus Ministry program to better serve nearby Cal Poly and Cuesta College students. We would also like to develop programs involving the Love to Learn Preschool and the new Senior Care Facility soon to be on our campus.

Presently, we at Mt. Carmel feel we are a cohesive congregation that is poised to move forward and take on new opportunities to do God's work in our community and elsewhere in the world.

To move ahead and realize the congregation's goals, Mt. Carmel needs a pastor with a passion to do God's work and a shared vision with the congregation about its future. We desire a new pastor who will be active in the life of the congregation and be available to lead and minister to its members. A new pastor should also be a team player and be willing to work with its strong lay leadership. A youthful spirit and a willingness to work with youth, help us grow our membership and attract younger families and college students would be desirable

We pray that God will bless us with a qualified, compassionate and energetic pastor to lead us forward.

Respectfully Submitted by the MET Team – April ?, 2021

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