

Applying Appreciative Inquiry, Performance Improvement, and Positive Psychology: Assessment of Non-Profit Sustainability

Nancy Crain Burns

Crain Burns Associates LLC, USA & International Society for Performance Improvement, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a member of multiple organizations, one may find that there are relationships and situations that span those organizations. When reviewing the intersection of those relationship/situations, it is a good idea to use innovative principles and practices of performance improvement to offer recommendations. This case study describes the approach to reach a positive recommendation for a non-profit, faith-based organization. By using concepts of appreciative inquiry, the ten principles of human performance improvement (ISPI), and positive psychology as described in Flow by (Csikszentmihalyi in 1990, the practitioner was able to “step back” and view the big picture. The situation required reviewing whether the church daycare could continue to sustain operations despite a challenging financial outlook. Some members of the church council were concerned about the financial reports while others thought that the daycare was a valuable ministry that should be continued. The council president appointed a task force to review viability of the daycare organization.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Established in the 1970's, by the early 2000's, Mission Lutheran Church (a pseudonym) was an active congregation with 280 members. During that time, the church's mission stated, “*Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we are a family of Christians dedicated to serving Christ and sharing God's promise of salvation.*” Mission Lutheran Church Daycare fit into the ministry of sharing Christ's love with the community.

- **Mission Lutheran Church Daycare Mission Statement:** Mission Lutheran Church Christian Daycare seeks to provide for the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development of the whole child, with Christ as the central focus throughout the process.

Mission Lutheran Church Daycare is a nonprofit daycare, non-discriminatory in both hiring and enrollment practices, licensed by the State of Tennessee for 49* children ages 2 months-5 years old. It is sponsored and supported by, and accountable to, Mission Lutheran Church as a 501c(3) nonprofit, and it is evaluated by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and the Mission Lutheran Church Early Childhood Ministry Board. The daycare provides Christian-based curriculum, teaching, and caregiving. (*Note: Current capacity and staffing are adequate for a maximum of 44 children.)

Nonprofit Organization (Structure)

Mission Lutheran Church Christian Daycare is owned and supported by Mission Lutheran Church as a 501c(3) nonprofit. Within the Church organization, an Early Childhood Ministry Board (ECM) hires a director to manage the daycare with the help and support of Mission Lutheran Church. The Early Childhood Ministry Board is accountable to the Church Council and Congregation of Mission Lutheran Church.

The Early Childhood Ministry Board determines policies and, together with the director, establishes a budget. Because it has responsibility for the daycare and provides financial support, the Mission Lutheran Church Council must approve the budget.

SETTING THE STAGE

In the early 2000's, Mission Lutheran Church Daycare was added as a part-time ministry. Within three years, the daycare grew to a full-time program. During 2016, capacity for the daycare was 44 children. But enrollment dropped from 42 to 34, raising some concerns.

Current church council members were not familiar with the history of the daycare's formation. They did know that the Board of Stewardship allocated funding to special ministries and missions. And for many years, the church had agreed to allocate funds for the daycare.

So due to the downturn in revenue, Gary Burnstone (pseudonym) requested additional funds (\$40,000) for the following fiscal year. This seemed to be a substantial portion of the annual budget. Church Council President Charlie Newburg (pseudonym) appointed a Mission Daycare Task Force to explore the financial situation and make recommendations to the council. Task force members included Board Chairs of Church Growth, Stewardship, Finance, Early Childhood Ministry, and the Church Council, ensuring representation by a cross-section of leadership.

At this point, an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the council task force members is essential.

Church Council

The Church Council consisted of the President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, President of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, and the Chairpersons of the Boards of Elders, Finance, Church Property, Christian Education, Stewardship, Youth Ministry, Christian

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