

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Case Objectives and Use

The primary objective of this case is to illustrate that strategic management is applicable in religious organizations. The mission and the objectives of a church are listed for comparison with the actions of the organization. Strategic planning by a large volunteer committee is discussed. The need for planning, funding and target marketing is described. Constraints on the decision making process are demonstrated.

Based upon field research, the case is appropriate for courses in small business, entrepreneurship and strategic management. The case is best suited for the undergraduate level.

Case Synopsis

Grace Lutheran Church, formed in 1963, has enjoyed stable growth. It is financially healthy and has a close-knit church community. In an effort to pro-actively plan, a long-term planning committee of approximately 50 members was formed. They chose the publication and workbook, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church by Kennon L. Callahan to guide them.

Constrained by a book written by a Methodist and not always a good "fit" for their Lutheran denomination, they are sometimes frustrated with the planning process. They are further constrained by the admonition of the book to focus exclusively on "strengths to exploit and objectives to develop." Discouragement of any mention of weakness, problems, shortcomings or threats hindered their discussion.

The work of the planning committee centered on the twelve keys to an effective church, as identified in the book. Focusing on the positive, they were able to identify many things they are doing well, and are determined to build on these strengths. By downplaying the negative, however, they find themselves questioning whether focusing on their strengths alone is enough.

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