

12-16-17

This week our Pastor's Corner features some thoughts from our Community Services director, Michelle Candy. We hope these brief comments give you an idea about the direction we want to take with this important ministry.

Hello, Bismarck church family! I'd like to introduce myself and my church office. My name is Michelle Candy, and I've lived in Bismarck for 2 ½ years. This year, I was asked to be the Bismarck church's Community Services director. I decided to accept the position, after talking with Pastor Tyler about his vision for our church's Community Service program. I'd like to take a few moments to explain the plans for Community Service and outreach so there is a wider understanding of the direction we'd like to be headed in.

We have a goal of moving forward with a visioning project in conjunction with the team at re Focusing. They will be coming to Bismarck, starting in the fall of 2018, to help us focus on personal and corporate service. You can check out their website (refocusing.org) to see the steps we'll be following.

So what happens in the meantime? What am I, as Community Service director, doing? Great question, and glad you asked!

To begin with, I am familiarizing myself with needs in our community. Did you know, for example, that there are between 200-400 homeless students attending Bismarck Public Schools? Did you know that many of the female New Americans in Bismarck are unable to attend English classes at the Adult Learning Center for various reasons? Did you know that more than 90% of convicted felons will be released on parole or directly and often need support in the community in order to have a successful transition, including housing and job placement?

This is a drop in the bucket of the needs in our community. Most people in this church are much better informed than I am of other needs (medical, social, mental health, educational, parenting, etc). So how do we choose the direction in which to get involved? The needs are great, but we need a focused approach. If I choose a direction in which to go, then Community Service becomes *MY* project, and I end up trying to convince the church of the importance of *MY* goals and aspirations. This, however, is not the way it should be. We as a church need to prayerfully and corporately make this decision.

To that end, I have several requests as we move toward our meetings next fall:

- 1) As you become aware of needs in the community, or think of some that we need to be aware of, pass them on to me or Pastor Tyler. I'm available at **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**
- 2) Pray about the needs God is placing on your heart. You may not be called to become involved with English conversation classes or serving at a soup kitchen, but there are many other areas in which God may be nudging you to become more involved.
- 3) Research areas in which you can become involved. There are many ministries and non-faith-based volunteer opportunities in town. For starters, you can check **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** . Another place to check is **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** .

Once a year our church volunteers for Trinity Lutheran's Banquet, but you can volunteer individually any other time as well: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** .

4) Start (or continue) personal volunteer work. Outreach can be as varied as giving Bible studies, helping a New American study for a driver's license, reading with an at-risk child, or helping prepare or serve a wholesome meal. A church full of people already involved in personal volunteering will be more in-tune with and ready for corporate outreach.

Thank-you to those who have asked me what direction I'm wanting the Community Services department to go in. I love that you are interested in being involved with our community! Please join with me in praying for the direction that our church should be moving regarding outreach to our city.