

**ST. STEPHEN'S EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Lexington, South Carolina

STRATEGIC PLAN

June 2011

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Chapter 1 | History of the Church | 3 |
| Chapter 2 | Church Profile | 9 |
| Chapter 3 | Strategic Plan | 16 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Vision▪ Mission▪ Values▪ Guiding Principles▪ Ministries | |
| Chapter 4 | Implementing the Plan | 18 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Goals/Strategies▪ Objectives | |

CHAPTER 1

Short History of St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church (from before 1830 to today).

Some parishes are entwined with the life of the current local community, while others serve the former community whose residents have relocated as the demographics of areas have changed. Some congregations serve as regional congregations in an area where they exist as an outpost of a particular denomination, while others are the home or mother church to the area with congregational offspring scattered seven to ten miles in every direction. Some congregations are relatively new- comers to the area serving the influx of new residents, while others have a long history.

The history of St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church is nearly impossible to separate from the fabric of life in the town of Lexington. The roots of Lexington, South Carolina can be traced back to the royal township of Saxe-Gotha. There were eleven such townships established by the crown through its Colonial government in 1735 to promote settlement of upper regions of the royal colony of South Carolina. These enclaves were birthed to serve as a zone of protection between Native American Tribes who resided in the west and the plantation system characterized by slave labor and historic English ownership in the eastern portions of the state. The roots of the name Saxe-Gotha bear tribute to the joining in Holy Matrimony of Princess Augusta of the German State of Saxe-Gotha to the Prince of Wales the heir to the throne of British Empire. Colonial Saxe-Gotha covered most of the current geographical boundaries of present Lexington County. The majority of settlers, who came to seek their fortune in the new world, providing homes and livings for their families in this western protective area, were in large part from principalities and city-states of Germany. Others settlers migrated from Virginia and Pennsylvania with many of these pioneers also coming from either of German or Scotch-Irish backgrounds.

In post revolutionary America, Lexington County was established in 1785. It changed its name from Saxe-Gotha to Lexington in honor of the battle in Massachusetts. The county's first seat was at Granby, located on the Congaree River south of the current town of Cayce. As land

up the river became pressed into service for the growth of King Cotton, Granby became beleaguered by water run off and the commensurate disease problems. The county seat was moved from Granby in 1820 when the present town of Lexington was laid out on a high ground near the geographical center of the county. This location was near the intersection of two great Native American Trading Routes that now serve as the base for United States Highways 378 and 1. The village was known as Lexington Courthouse until the 1880's.¹

President of the South Carolina Synod Rev. Dr. John Bachman noted the fact that this large German farming community that surrounded this growing new county seat had no congregation Lutheran or otherwise. He addressed the Synodical convention in November 1830, "a church 40 by 60 feet is being built at Lexington Court House and is in a considerable state of forwardness. This, when completed, will be the only church in that flourishing village. The location is favorable for the formation of a large congregation."²

The congregation formed was named St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church and to this day still is the only Lutheran Congregation in the state of South Carolina to bear the name of the first Christian martyr. The roots of St. Stephen's go back to the year 1830 in which the congregation was organized and the dedication of the first church building on Reformation Sunday 1831.

There are some facts concerning the birth story of St. Stephen's and her long fruitful life which are atypical to church life in the south. St. Stephen's served as the only church in the county seat for nearly 27 years. It is rare in the southern United States to encounter a county seat where the only church for more than a quarter of a century was Lutheran. Usually the Baptist and the Methodist congregations are downtown within a stone's throw from one another, with maybe an Episcopal or Presbyterian congregation somewhere in the area. In Lexington, the Lutheran congregation of St. Stephen's was the only church until the Methodists arrived in 1858 struggling until after the War Between the States. The Baptist church was not organized until the turn of the century. To this day there are only three downtown churches in Lexington. St. Stephen's Church is inexorably linked to old Lexington. This interdependence is a powerful rudder that guides her journey as she seeks to be faithful in mission and ministry in new waters that engulf this community with the coming of new residents and congregations. She sits on the high ground in Lexington just a block off Main Street and its imposing court house. The congregation resides on Church Street now in its fourth building. Beside her rests a large and

ancient graveyard which served the community for many years. The town hall, library, and fire department dwelt for generations beside the church in her shadow before moving to larger spaces. In the middle years of the 1900's each Wednesday afternoon the local school that is within walking distance from the church let out early to allow those children who wished to attend weekday church school.

As one walks through the downtown art galleries and gift shops, paintings or pen and inks of the massive grey and pick granite gothic nave and towering spire can be seen usually in the collage art views of Lexington. Such pictures hang throughout local businesses. One can purchase the miniatures of the sanctuary in numerous places. This is to say that the current edifice constructed in 1957 stands as one of the symbols of Lexington.

Her spire and bell still keep watch over Lexington Courthouse and her carillon still chimes the hours and plays liturgical music. On days when the bells do not ring chiming the hours, people call the office to inquire what is wrong. As the outside of the edifice is viewed, one observes the spire pointing to God and red doors through which one enters the cruciform nave to worship. When one enters through the spire to the nave the first stained glass window that is encountered portrays each of the previous three churches with their dates inscribed beneath. The first sanctuary, the 40 x 60 building that Dr. Bachman spoke about so long ago in 1865, along with most of the town, was virtually destroyed by General Sherman's Union Army. The courthouse, jail and St. Stephen's were consumed by the flames of occupation along with many businesses and homes. As the defeated soldiers returned to beleaguered families, they found their town devastated. They struggled to rebuild under the strain of federal reconstruction. Some of the senior members of the congregation still share stories of these days that they learned at the knees of their grandparents. It took until 1870 to raise enough capital to build a new church. Money was so scarce in the reconstruction south that the building which arose from the ashes of the first was a rather odd two story affair with the Lutherans using the first floor and the masons holding their lodge meetings on the second story.

The second wooden structure served until 1897 when the Lutherans and masons parted company. The Lodge moved across the street where it still resides today and the congregation built a new stone church on the other side of the street beside the cemetery. While the stone edifice which is still known to senior members as the rock church was under construction, a fire (the cause of which is still debated), burned the second church to the ground. Once again the

congregation was displaced and ravaged by fire until the completion of the rock church.

The rock church could no longer hold the growing congregation and was torn down and replaced by the current building in 1957. The new nave and education wing replacing the 1897 (3rd) edition in 1957 was at its completion the largest congregational facility in the town of Lexington. In 1973 an industrial kitchen, fellowship hall for seating of 300, a parlor downstairs, and choir room upstairs was added.

By the time of the 2005-06 renovation and expansion the congregation and its staff had grown. The entire existing complex was renovated with windows, paint, carpet, windows, centrally controlled AC/Heat. The education space was also significantly altered and expanded. The size of the plant was doubled with the addition of a multi-purpose high school size gym space for large gatherings, basketball, volley ball and a full stage. The addition included enlargement of the kitchen, additional meeting rooms for the congregation, offices and workrooms for the staff, new choir suites, 3 additional classrooms and senior high youth room. With the addition of an elevator the entire facility is now handicapped accessible.

The town of Lexington in the center of the State of South Carolina like many places in the upper south, has experienced seismic change with an influx of new people moving into its' boundaries. Heretofore Lexington since 1820 the county seat of Lexington, in the center of the midlands of South Carolina, had been in numerous ways a culturally and ethnically isolated population a the dissolution of the Native American culture this land was repopulated by the arrival of immigrant Scot-Irish and German settlers and later Africans who were brought forcibly to this land grant domain. In the past decades another group of settlers have arrived to begin their journey in the town of Lexington. New homes and congregations are literally exploding all around the boundaries of the township and the surrounding county.

St. Stephen's has grown rapidly over the last 25 years to become the largest Lutheran church in central South Carolina and one of the three biggest in the Synod.

The congregation has moved in the past century from being a pastoral, to a program church, and currently is a corporate sized Church. The size parameters in this paradigm are determined by worship numbers. Alice Mann in her book *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations* has set the benchmark numbers for this theory as:

Pastoral Size 50-150 average attendance in Sunday Worship

Program Size 150-350 average attendance in Sunday Worship

Corporate Size 350-500+ average attendance in Sunday Worship 3

Many of the longer tenured members still reside in the pastoral ministry frame dominant in the church from post WW II through the 60's. This point of view understands the pastor as a spider working the web of the church, knowing all the connections and tending it, the web occasionally catching some who happen by. At St. Stephen's, the web has grown too large for one spider to work. In program and corporate size congregations it becomes necessary to seek to involve other servant "spiders" into the leadership of the church. In the pastoral centered church contact with the pastor and the formal and informal communication that springs from this interaction occurs frequently as he/she is active in aspects of the churches ministry. Inclusion of new and renewed members in the life of the church is facilitated on a more personal one on one basis. In the corporate congregation communication and interaction with the Pastoral staff occurs primarily in worship, and structured setting and situations such as classes, boards, and tasks groups in the congregation.

End Notes

1. Portions of this Historical Background were gleaned from Town of Lexington. "History of The Town of Lexington." Available at <http://www.lexsc.com/history.htm>. were combined with the author's knowledge.

2. This quote from Rev. Dr. John Bachman was found in the archives of both St. Stephen's Lutheran Church.

3. Alice Mann, *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations*, (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 2002), 3.

Themes that have emerged in our culture from our history:

1. a church of “firsts”
2. perseverance
3. growth
4. German roots
5. Caring for the community
6. Central point for the community
7. Defined by its history
8. Family-oriented in that kinship and the generational “dynasty”
of the family’s commitment is important
9. The ONLY church
10. The ONLY St. Stephen’s
11. The “stone” church

CHAPTER 2

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church: Profile

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, 119 N. Church Street, Lexington, South Carolina 29072

(803) 359-6562 Phone

(803) 951-0738 Fax

(803) 808-6471 Crisis Care Line

www.sslc.org Website

Pastors:

Rev. Dr. Patrick W. Riddle

Rev. Dr. Dennis R. Bolton

Parish Staff:

Mrs. Shannon Burnett

Director of Family Life

Mrs. Carole Allen

Administrative Assistant

Mrs. Lavone Roberson

Financial Secretary

Mr. Jim Dicker

Property Manager

Preschool Director:

Beth Haggard

Music Director

Miss Bailey Slice

Organists:

Dr. Sally Cherrington-Beggs

Mr. James Ingram Jr.

Congregational Officers:

President Leonard Carroll

Vice President Mary Keisler

Treasurer Bill Matthais

Secretary Bonnie Bouknight

Council Members:

Terri Brock

Sandra Dicker

Rick Swaffield

Dianne Taylor

Pat Bowen

Jennifer Carter

John Lyon

Tammi Smith

Pat Caughman

Eddie Howard

Bob Lowman

Craig McFarland

1. Church Demographics

a. Geographic Areas Covered:

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church is a regional church that draws from Lexington, Irmo, Gilbert, West Columbia and Red Bank.

| | |
|--|--------|
| Membership at end of 2008 | 1498 |
| Members received during 2009: | |
| a. By Baptism: children (15 yrs. and younger) | 11 |
| b. By Baptism: adults (16 yrs. and older) | 0 |
| c. By affirmation of faith | 10 |
| d. By transfer | 21 |
| e. From other sources and statistical adjustment | 0 |
| f. Total members received this year | + 42 |
| Members removed during 2009: | |
| a. By death | 14 |
| b. By transfer | 21 |
| c. For other reasons and statistical adjustment | 0 |
| d. Total members removed this year | - 35 |
| Membership, end of 2009 | = 1505 |
| Number of people confirmed in 2009 | 11 |
| a. Total confirmed membership, end 2009 | 562 |
| Average weekly worship attendance in 2009: | 353 |

b. Information about the congregation's financial stewardship

Receipts during 2009

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| a. Regular giving | \$1,269,689 |
| b. Designated giving | \$370 |
| c. Earned income (any source) | \$233 |
| d. Grants (any source) | \$0 |
| e. All other receipts | \$0 |
| f. Total receipts | \$1,270,292 |

Assets as of December 31, 2009

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| a. Church real estate | \$12,607,500 |
| b. Endowment and memorial funds | \$39,665 |
| c. Cash, savings, bonds, etc. | \$135,396 |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| d. All other assets | \$ 10,000 |
| e. Total assets | \$12,792,551 |
| | |
| <u>Total indebtedness as of Dec. 31, 2009</u> | \$3,753,147 |
| | |
| Disbursements during 2009 | |
| | |
| a. Current operating expenses | \$721,495 |
| b. Capital improvements | \$0 |
| | |
| c. Payments on debts | \$331,679 |
| d. Mission Support (regular synod benevolence) | \$72,401 |
| e. Other benevolence sent directly to the synod (for any synod OR churchwide appeal including the World Hunger Appeal, Disaster Response, missionary sponsorship, etc.) | \$4,858 |
| All other benevolence sent directly to the recipient. | \$7,697 |
| | |
| Total Disbursements | \$1,138,130 |

c. Parishioner Segments

The parish is made up of primarily (1497) white/Caucasian members, (4) latino members, and (4) multiracial members. Additionally, our members appear to fall into the following segments:

- **> 65 years of age (retirees):** active in ministries and stewardship; prime time; “Chat ‘n Chew”; enjoy the Wednesday program
- **55-65 years of age:** just starting to participate in the ministries; have been busy raising children and working jobs up to now; active in Bible Study, Cemetery, Ushers, Council
- **35-55 years of age:** very busy with children and jobs; interested in social and professional activities; not very active in the church; in fact, in the Lexington County area many of these individuals attend Mt. Horeb; want to build deep relationships with their peers
- **21-35 years of age:** starting to see enrollments in the church from this group of college graduates; may be choosing where they want to live and raise their children; interested in attending a church where their young children will worship and receive their religious education; interested in getting to know their peers
- **<21 years of age:** participate in the Youth Program, Scouts, Communion, Confirmation, etc.

d. There is an additional dynamic in the church that has to do with the time of the worship service (8:30 or 11:00). Individuals who attend each of these services feel a connection to the others that also attend that service. There is a connection between the service group and the charismatic leaders affiliated with the service group; there is also a special connection to the spiritual leaders, determined by the service (time) group.

Sometimes, we think we are a very reactive congregation, rather than a pro-active one.

2. Church Statistics

| | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|-------------|-----------------|
| Membership | 1498 | 1505 |
| Baptisms | | 11 |
| Confirmation | | 11 |
| Average weekly worship attendance | | 353 |
| Active participants in congregational life | | 800 |
| Assets | | \$12,792,551 |
| Annual Income | | \$1,270,292 |
| Annual Expense | | \$1,053,174 |
| Benevolence: | | |
| *Mission Support | | \$72,401 |
| *Other | | \$ 4,858 |
| *Direct to Recipient | | <u>\$ 7,697</u> |
| | | \$84,956 |
| Total Disbursements | | \$1,138,130 |

3. Ministries Offered:

| Ministry | Chairperson |
|-----------------|--|
| Worship | Sally Oswald |
| Learning | Michelle Black and Tonya Reynolds |
| Witness | Terri Brock |
| Service | Peggy Sherman |
| Stewardship | Mary Keisler |

4. Current Environmental Context

- a. Lots of change in the Lexington area
- b. The recent economy has been difficult
- c. Increased competition in churches available for the people to attend (eg. 2 non-Lutheran churches: Mt Horeb, Saxegothe)
- d. The area may no longer be as “Lutheran” as it once was with the influx of newcomers
- e. Our younger members may have needs arising from their own generational point of view (material desires, like variety, are multi-taskers, will question everything and especially authority, are used to receiving things without much effort, are highly collaborative and visual, and know how to use resources.

5. Analysis of current situation:

a. Strengths:

- Tradition
- Foundation
- Structure
- Heritage
- Care for our own
- Have made greater use of our facility

b. Weaknesses:

- Lack of relevance
- Acceptance: do we make newcomers feel welcome? Do we need to integrate new members better?
- Tradition
- Foundation
- Structure: lots of “chiefs”
- Heritage

c. Opportunities:

- We need to “hook” new members
- We live in a growing community
- We need to leverage the “Lutheran” right place, right time
- We need to attract young adults
- We need to adapt to the changing environment
- We need to identify how to disseminate the “brand” into the community

d. Threats:

- If we continue doing the same things will we get different results?
- The changing environment and its impact on our ability to continue
- Participation from the youth/young adults
- Inner turmoil

6. Changes/Growth Patterns/Forecast:

When we think of what life will be like in Lexington or our church just five short years from now (2015), there are a number of things that come to mind:

- We think that Lexington may look a lot more like Irmo (crowded, diverse, urban)
- We think that we will see shifts in church attendance: Mt. Horeb might be too big and the “non-denominational” craze may have sorted itself out into new communities
- The young people like to talk more about “spirituality” than they do “religion”. This may affect our ministries.
- We are concerned about the level of commitment that younger members will have.
- With the building of a new high school, there will be more individuals using our resources. One issue is that we know that it takes a house priced in the \$180-200K range to create enough tax revenue to pay for the education of 1 child. Currently, the builders are building communities with homes that are priced lower than that: what will that mean for the education resources available for the children? If parents have to pay more fees to schools in order to ensure a quality education, how will that affect stewardship?
- At the same time that we may see a rise in the number of individuals using the resources of the church, working parents may also have to provide care for their aging parents. This care may be provided at the home, but perhaps local churches could offer adult day care.
- We think that the Lake Murray Region will continue to grow and to be valued as an asset.
- Financially, we think that savings will be strained and that incomes/expense will be very tight.
- We are concerned that with growth, there may be a growth in the criminal element of society and that may impact quality of life in Lexington.
- It is in our history to be reactive and, perhaps, territorial. What will that mean during a period of high growth? Do we need to start thinking NOW about needs that will arise then? (eg. We already have a wait list for pre-school: we may find that opening more room for this activity can offset other needs for the church).

7. Forecast income & expense considerations:

If we see a growth in the number of parishioners to be served but a decline in the annual income, we will need to consider use of other resources in order to make ends meet.

- We have already cut budget expenses during 2008, 2009 and 2010. We are operating on a very tight budget.
- We may have to spend more time recruiting new parishioners, hoping that their stewardship may offset dwindling financial resources. We may need to tailor the message of the church (in recruiting efforts) in order to acquire new members.
- We will need to develop personal commitment within parishioners.
- We should benchmark other churches to see what they do, and how we could learn from their practices.
- We may need to focus on the core competence of the church and prioritize its focus.
- We may need to look for grants and other types of reimbursements as we try to guide the church through the financial tightness.
- We need to assess the talent of the membership and involve them in more of the activities, so that we can complete our mission within our financial means.

8. Church facilities:

We just expanded our facilities and will need to use them for a variety of events in the future. Our rooms may need to become more “multi-purpose” in nature. For example, we don’t like “litter” in the day care rooms today, but we may need to get used to this as we take care of youth and aged in some of the same rooms.

It may require that we purchase “lockers” and storage closets for materials unique to different activities, so that the leaders can find their things even though they share rooms, scheduled by the hour/day.

CHAPTER 3

THE PLAN

Vision: People of Faith, Making A Difference.

Mission: We seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through worship, learning, witness, service, and stewardship. Our calling is to be individually and collectively a People of God's Love in the world.

Values: We believe in:

- Perseverance
- Heritage/Tradition
- Family
- Foundational Stability (roots)
- Connections (pastoral and programmatic)
- Traditional Worship
- Volunteerism (guided by the mission of the church)

Guiding Principles: *(our rules for making decisions)*

1. We will always challenge ourselves and consider new ideas while also honoring accomplishments of the past.
2. Family members are welcome, safe, empowered, enabled, invited and encouraged to be part of this Body.
3. We take the time to gather consensus so we make deliberate decisions that matter.
4. We believe that belonging to this Church requires being found through the (southern-style) connections we provide and sanction. We encourage our young adults to embrace our belief system.
5. We value the traditions of perseverance, family and stability that connect each one of us to the whole through traditional worship.

Our Ministries: *(define these are they are currently used, and discuss whether they will mean anything different in the future)*

- a. Worship: the traditional types of service that we offer
- b. Learning: social & educational
- c. Witness: evangelical activities
- d. Service: social, sports, and scouting activities
- e. Stewardship: financial oversight

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Goals/Strategies: *(things our church does all the time within each of the ministries)*

Worship: **Goal #1:** Retain the quality of the music at our Sunday services

Goal #2: Continue the traditional, conservative feel of our worship services and our approach to religion

Goal #3: Involve the FAMILY in ushering, acolytes, gifts, etc.

Learning: **Goal #1:** Provide more social events for the working parents in our parish. Eg., (a) “playgroup for moms”, (b) the Lenten dinner/social, etc.

Goal #2: Provide professional seminars of interest to the 35-50 year old group; use the talent in the membership to provide the information.

Witness: **Goal #1:** Increase outreach efforts in the community so our image is clear to the entire area

Goal #2: Enable the various age groups in the church to invite each other to church activities, social activities, etc.

Goal #3: Locate, enable, and equip volunteer(s) for this ministry, who will be able to enlist fellow parishioners to join with them in witness activities; thus “branding” the church within its own community, as well as in Lexington.

Service: **Goal #1:** Continue the scouting program; it builds character, integrity in the youth and is vital to the longevity of the church and Lexington

Goal #2: Create sports events that families can participate in.

Goal #3: Continue LICS

Goal #4: Meet the needs of the local military personnel

Goal #5: Create a human care group for adult health; home health needs

Stewardship:

Goal#1: Increase awareness of the financial issues facing the church throughout the church community; find a “classy” way of asking for help.

Goal #2: Expand the understanding of “stewardship” throughout the church to include time, talent and treasure. To find the professional talent within the church, create a brochure, list the individuals who help in all the committees and ministries; find a way to follow up with the ones who don’t volunteer and invite them to participate in something. How do we make it easy for others to commit?