



Mission Grant Report Form

Iowa District West

Grant recipients are asked to complete and submit the report form within one month of the completion of the effort or, if a continuing ministry, by January 31 of the following year in which the grant is received. Please submit any pictures, as well, that would help to share the story with other congregations to encourage them in their ministry.

1. Please provide a brief overview of the effort.

Gloria Dei applied for and received an Ablaze grant in the spring of 2013. This new ministry is focused on adults in the millennial age group, approximately ages 18 to 34. A ministry action team led by Dan Petrak and assisted by Pastor Phil Robarge was formed and developed through the spring and summer months of 2013. This team started by reading some of the research done about ministering to this age and much was learned in this process.

Starting this ministry with millennials in our congregation seemed like a first logical step. The team has about 8 members from Gloria Dei in the millennial age group and we have strived to empower them to plan and implement the vision and strategies. Based on the group we have assembled, we decided to initially focus on young professionals within the Des Moines area. We recognize the diversity within this age group and taking too broad of a focus at the beginning seemed overwhelming. As a result, we have decided to delay an overt ministry to college age students until we have the human resources and capacity to do so.

Several key themes have come to the front through our readings, meetings and discussions. We have decided to make this ministry relationally focused instead of primarily event driven. We want to create an environment in which millennials can engage one another and begin to grapple with their questions about God and the Gospel. Millennials are very skeptical of the church and religion in general, so overcoming this stigma is not easy. This has prompted us to take on a more missional focus of "Go and Tell" instead of "Come and See".

We have decided to initially organize ourselves in a Facebook group. We have a private group for those of us on the ministry action team and have just recently created a public Facebook presence. We are going to use the name Mosaic for our group to be more appealing to diverse groups and also to encourage dialogue about the name. Mosaic promotes the idea of people of various backgrounds coming together to make something beautiful. The idea of community is important to millennials and we want to create a community that is more than just "doing good things". We want to be able to glorify God through our actions and relationships and proclaim the Gospel as reason why. We want to engage each other and the world by showing love and unashamedly pointing the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ.

2. What goals were established for this effort; that is, what did you hope to accomplish?

Our goal was to create a ministry action team and to determine the best way to minister to the Millennial generation in our community. Initially we thought about adding a worship service off-site, coordinating efforts with local college ministries, and trying several alternative approaches in an event driven ministry. We quickly back peddled on several of these ideas and realized we had much to learn before we dive headlong into this ministry.

We started looking at research from the Barna Group and read the book I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus. We met several times synchronously and asynchronously through a Google Community and Google Hangout. We started an effort called Shalom Circles to encourage those in the group to become more aware of others in their circles of influence that exhibit or need God's peace.

We created a short video for the congregation to invite others to join us and have not decided to pursue a social media presence through Facebook as our mechanism to engage those outside the church. The public group name is Mosaic and we are currently in the development of content, process, and definition of the purposes we will use the site for.

3. Did you achieve your goals? If not, what do you think were some of the contributing factors?

Many of the goals laid out in the grant were not realized this first year for many of the reasons stated above. Starting small and scaling through our current human resources, time and relationships seemed the best route for us this first year. Narrowing our focus to those in our immediate community (young professionals more than college students) has helped us prioritize our efforts.

4. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to undertake this effort again?

Yes, we should have created the team earlier in the process and determined actionable steps based on the people involved. We were blessed to have a new believer become active in our group and we should have actively sought out more people like this earlier in the process. Time will tell if going public primarily through social media will be a good strategy.

5. What lessons were learned through this effort?

Research best practices, find faithful people to take leadership, and don't bite off more than you can chew. Also all the other observations listed before.

6. What suggestions would you give to a congregation considering a similar effort?

Find millennials in your church and put them in charge. Don't be afraid to engage the culture where they are at. Communicate your progress to the congregation and use a team approach based on relationships first and events second. We are just starting, so we have much to learn ourselves. The Gospel message is the Truth we live by and proclaiming this truth to a generation in dire need should be goal.

7. Contact person

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Congregation: _____ Gloria Dei Lutheran Church _____