

## **COMMENTS FROM SOME OF THE PASTORS AND PROGRAM LEADERS OF CHURCHES THAT HAVE IMPLIMENTED THE VISION 2 SERVE PROGRAM**

### **Pastor Chuck Tews, Trinity Lutheran Church, Waupaca, WI**

Vision 2 Serve has been a great faith builder for our people. Normally, stewardship programs have mainly been about money. Helping people grow in their faith through prayer, member visitation, fasting, scripture study, and other involvement, I believe, is a key to faith building. Stewardship is a faith issue. The level of a person's giving usually indicates the spiritual level of their life. Since implementing the Vision 2 Serve program we have seen an increase in financial offerings and a growth in our congregation. This new giving has helped us achieve several mission projects that otherwise would not have been undertaken.

### **Pastor Mike Free, Metro Harvest Church, Menomonee Falls, WI**

One of the things we liked was the program was kept on a spiritual level. We really felt we were working with a mature, spiritual group of Christians that were interested in seeing the kingdom of God advanced in our city. Members really rallied around the idea of supporting the vision. They felt no obligation to give, that it was between them and the Lord, freeing them up to be cheerful givers.

### **Co-Pastors Scott and Paula Geister-Jones, Christ Lutheran Church, Stoughton, WI**

As people gathered for worship on Sunday morning our church was in ashes, the result of a devastating fire. We stared at the remains of our sanctuary with broken stained glass, twisted metal, and the smell of loss. How would we go forward? Our people were fractured like our building. In the months that followed the Spirit of Christ lead us through the ashes and into God's new future. Vision 2 Serve and John Gillespie helped our congregation see its vision and discover its unity. We moved forward with teams of leaders, member to member conversations, and clear, understandable objectives. Two years and two months later we celebrated worship in our new church facility

### **Judy & Roger Nitzsche, Program Leaders, Christ Lutheran Church, Stoughton, WI**

At the time our church council voted to hire the Vision 2 Serve Program our church was in an upheaval. We had lost the church to an arson fire. The church family was becoming divided; we had no home, no direction, relative new pastors and a council president struggling in his job. We needed an unbiased third party to intervene. This program brought our congregation back to the basics. They found they were needed, their voices counted, and we would survive as we moved on together in love. We are grateful for John Gillespie and the Vision 2 Serve Program.

### **Pastor Kirby Anderson, Word of Grace Community Church, Sheboygan Falls, WI**

Vision 2 Serve greatly helped us define our vision and goals in a way that united the whole church. It provided an opportunity to give monthly updates on progress we were making and a chance to fuel our passion throughout the year. In addition to their regular giving, people pledged a little over 10% more toward expansion projects for the year. Those pledged amounts were exceeded in just 9-months. We are into our second year and are looking forward to another great year.

### **Chris and Lynn McNamee, Word of Grace Community Church, Sheboygan Falls, WI**

The Vision 2 Serve program was implemented very quickly and effortlessly at our church. We served as program directors and the program was very successful. It enabled our church to communicate a vision for expansion, in membership, in ministry, as well as initiate a capital program. The follow-up communication tools have been very effective in keeping everyone informed about the program results. The church currently is in the middle of our second year with the program, and it is even more successful this year.

### **Pastor Allen Stoll, Hope Lutheran Church, DePere, WI**

We considered a program from our own denomination but chose this program over them because of the overt Christian message. The congregation appreciated that we did not come at them from a financial approach, but it was presented as part of our mission (vision) of our congregation. The prayer vigil was our biggest spiritual event of the year and something that unified our congregation. It really helped to pull us together.

### **Joe Zack, Program Leader, Trinity Evangelical Free Church, Ripon, WI**

The Vision 2 Serve Program we utilized at Trinity Evangelical Free Church was everything we hoped it to be. We were able to meet our financial goals and in addition were able to get people involved that were previously uninvolved. This was a result of the step by step process this program provided.

**Pastor Zeke Mazemke, (Ret.) St. Martin Lutheran Church, Clintonville, WI**

Vision 2 Serve with its scriptural and spiritual approach united our congregation. It eliminated much of the apathy and indifference that often happens in an old and large congregation. It was like a shot in the arm. We gained a new sense of mission and vitality. New Leaders were found, new visions were gained, and a new spirit is still being enjoyed.

**Connie Carpenter, Program Leader, St. Martin Lutheran Church, Clintonville, WI**

The Vision 2 Serve Program was an invaluable tool to our congregation's ministry. It set a foundation for our spiritual and financial growth that we continue to build on. The Vision 2 Serve Program provided us with the resources that simplified the program implementation.

**Pastor Steve Solberg, First Lutheran Church, Manitowoc, WI**

"First for God," is the name we selected for our Vision 2 Serve Program to define our expression of commitment. After just under a year's exposure, we are enjoying the way the program has enlisted the abilities and excitement of our people and empowered communication across multiple congregational ministries...and all in the midst of change of our senior pastor. We utilized the personal visits as part of our transition strategy, seeking input from the congregation for future vision goals and staffing needs. The monthly ministry celebrations in worship help people "see the face of God" through our new ministries to our congregation, our community, and the world.

**Program Leader, Simone Dorcas, First Lutheran Church, Manitowoc, WI**

The Vision 2 Serve program was what First Lutheran needed to get our congregation to realize there are all kinds of gifts that can be given to the church. We have had many people step forward to volunteer for boards and committees. Many have commented very positively about the new relationships that they have made through this program. We have found that communication and connectivity in a congregation are extremely important and the Vision 2 Serve program provides the specifics that make this happen. The first year the Vision 2 Serve Program is implemented the Program Leader puts in a lot of time. But it truly becomes a blessing for the congregation once it is in place. We are looking forward to year two.

**Pastor Rick Hines, Community Free Church, Manitowoc, WI**

We set a minimum goal we needed to have pledged before we could proceed with our building project and we exceeded that goal. We have been in our building several years now.

**Pastor Catherine Mode, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Neenah, WI**

During my ministry, I've used a number of different companies for stewardship education and capital fund raising. There are two key components that set Vision 2 Serve apart from others. 1) There was a point early in the program that everyone involved took a pledge to "be Totally Positive". Of course there's a process that leads up to this event so when the time comes to make the pledge, even the critics are willing to promise to be positive. Even though that was over two years ago, our leaders still hold to that promise and we pass that attitude on to our new leaders. 2) We had many great ideas for church growth but were really struggling to focus. Our coach, Rob Strauss, hung in there and wouldn't let us be vague or try to do everything the first year. The results were well worth the effort.

**Pastor James Stein, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Pewaukee, WI**

Vision 2 Serve brought new vitality and purpose to our congregation. It was especially effective in helping us reach out to others in our community, not only with the message of the Gospel, but also by expanding our ministry in specific programs and volunteer efforts in our community. At the end of the first year we were able to look back on a record of solid ministry expansion that would not have occurred without Vision 2 Serve.

**Pastor Mark Mollidrem, First Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, WI**

We found John Gillespie and Rob Strauss to be men of high integrity and deep Christian faith whose goal was to serve our congregation. The program they introduced to us was "right on" in defining our focus. It was amazing to see that even though we were in a deficit situation, extra monies came in for the expanding ministry goals we had identified.



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**Robert L. Cosmas, Pastor**

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March 4, 2008

Dear John & Steve,

I write to affirm the excellent work of Vision2Serve, formerly BGT. On Sunday, Trinity celebrated its' second year of ***Stepping Out of the Boat*** with Commitment Sunday.

I am delighted to report that we continue to grow our leadership by adapting the Vision2Serve plan. ***Stepping Out of the Boat*** has become, excuse the pun, *our flagship ministry*. Incorporating your materials Trinity has developed new textual themes, music, logo, PowerPoint's and training videos leading to a very positive 'branding' experience. We trust that Trinity will look forward to *Stepping Out of the Boat*, for many years to come. How exciting it is to move out of our comfort zones to grasp the outstretched hand of Jesus.

Over the last few years Vision2Serve has enabled us to enlesh our core values of up building the body of Christ, engaging mission outreach, and developing capable leaders. We have not used this as a 'program' rather incorporated it into our way of being church.

In 2007 our leadership involvement increased significantly as did our participation in over fifteen areas of ministry. Moreover, while I was skeptical about your significant giving projections, Trinity proved to substantially increase participation in ministry and giving to General Fund & Stepping Out categories.

You may know that some excellent work has been done by Lyle Schaller and the good folks at the Alban Institute. In 'old line' churches they have found a real disconnect between mission/vision statements and outcomes. Such statements are characterized by a failure to take root within the congregation. Trinity is excited to report the opposite results through ***Stepping Out of the Boat***. I believe that this is linked to the Biblically sound principals and Christ centered materials at the heart of Vision2Serve.

I reserve my only critique for closing. While meeting expectations in all categories, the Senior Pastor's involvement is grossly understated. While recognizing my own propensities to be 'over-committed' many hours of structural participation by the Senior are absolutely necessary for success in year one. [Be advised, I also had fabulous leadership!] Yet, this work paid great dividends and my involvement was kept to a minimum during year two.

With all of this being said, I give thanks to God for the mission and ministry of John and Steve Gillespie. They are dedicated, mature servants of God who 'know their stuff' and help others to develop a 'vision2serve'.

In His Peace,

Robert L. Cosmas, Senior Pastor  
Trinity Lutheran Church and School  
Kissimmee, Florida

***Trinity Lutheran is a family called by God to proclaim and share Christ's love, grace and forgiveness.***