

RE:VITALITY

SHEPHERDING OUR STRAYS

Actively Serving Our Inactive Members

“My people have been lost sheep ... They have forgotten their fold” (JEREMIAH 50:6).

OVERVIEW

Shepherding Our Strays (SOS) addresses a significant challenge for many congregations: engaging members who have separated themselves from the spiritual life of the congregation. Much more than a checklist for “cleaning up the rolls” or “clearing out the deadwood,” SOS provides congregational leaders and concerned members with practical processes and useful tools for reaching out to inactive members with care and intention.



The expected outcomes of SOS include:

- A better understanding of and greater compassion for inactive members;
- A greater awareness of the need to minister to inactive members;
- A realistic, effective plan for engaging short-term inactive members;
- A realistic, effective plan for engaging long-term inactive members; and
- A CARE Team equipped to implement these plans.

APPROACH



SOS begins with looking at the types of inactive members. Pictured in terms of a flock of sheep, members of the congregation are identified as “Safe,” “At Risk,” “Straying,” and “Strayed.” SOS specifically addresses reaching out to “Straying” (i.e., short-term inactive) and “Strayed” (i.e., long-term inactive) members. Straying and Strayed members are served through a Contact and Visitation Plan developed as part of the workshop.

SERVING OUR STRAYING MEMBERS

Serving Straying members focuses on putting a process in place for early intervention. This process includes incremental and intentional contact with people who are absent from worship, which is escalated at set points. This early intervention seeks to prevent long-term inactivity.



SERVING OUR STRAYED MEMBERS

Serving Strayed members is approached as a one-time effort to identify and engage long-term inactive members (i.e., members who have been absent from the spiritual life of the congregation for six months or more). The workshop equips CARE Team members to use the LASSIE approach of the *Every One His Witness*™ evangelism program for engaging Strayed members.



FORMAT

Shepherding Our Strays is made up of three parts: a pre-workshop Bible study, a self-directed workshop, and post-workshop implementation. (Note: the self-directed workshop is led by someone in the congregation, not an outside person.)



The pre-workshop Bible study explores the “what?” and “why?” of serving inactive members. It is designed to be used as a general Bible study to increase awareness and create interest in the overall congregation.



The self-directed workshop builds on the Bible study to address the “how to?” of serving our inactive members. It focuses on effective approaches to engaging Strayed and Straying members. The workshop leader’s guide provides all the information needed to plan and conduct the workshop.



Workshop exercises help the participants build a CARE Team for serving inactive members and to develop plans for engaging our Strayed and Straying members.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

The pastor(s), elders, and other members of the congregation who are concerned about inactive members and desire to see them restored to in the spiritual life of the congregation. Participants should be able to help develop a plan for reaching out to inactive members and to commit to a role in carrying out that plan as a CARE Team member.



COST

SOS is available to LCMS congregations through the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) at no cost.



GETTING STARTED

CONTACT US for more information about or to schedule *Shepherding Our Strays* for your congregation at

✉ WOR@lcms.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION about *re:Vitality* please visit

➔ lcms.org/revitalization

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