

Terri Anderson  
Personal Ministry Action Plan  
January 6, 2008

## **Phase I Strength Based Servant Ministry**

*This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."*  
(Jeremiah 6:16)

For some time now I have felt as though God is calling me to a different adventure: one which would require trust to walk out of my comfort zone and into an area where God would have me serve in a new way. My sense of the "new adventure" is that it is a form of full time servant ministry with a focus on bridging the gap between the homebound and aging and the congregation which enjoys the mobility of attending worship and other congregation functions.

The Strength Finder has pulled together in a very concrete way the tools God has given me to use in the past. One of my strengths is "Connectedness," which clearly explains my belief that God has used me in various circumstances, throughout my life, to fulfill a plan not only for me, but for a larger picture. I see God's hand in all of nature and mankind, and recognize my responsibility as a steward of God's creation and the gifts and strengths God has given me. For me, there are no boxes to divide God's people, but rather a flow of energy between ages, races, nationalities, religions, and sexes.

"Strategic" is the strength which allows me to see a need and formulate a plan to answer the need. Given the right amount of time, I can sort through a variety of options and determine a course of action that will lead to problem resolution with minimal resistance. I believe this strength was the power behind the development of Jacob's Ladder and that it will fortify my participation in whatever plan God has for me in the future.

My energy to be involved in many activities seems to stem from the strength of "Achiever." Even though I am in the age of retirement, I believe that God has plans to use me in a productive way to serve His kingdom. By prayerfully focusing on God's will, I believe that I will be able to accomplish His task on His schedule if I see each new day as the day in which to "be glad." Having "Adaptability" enables me to keep one goal in focus while being able to take temporary sidetracks when the need arises.

But it is "Empathy" which seems to be calling me specifically to formulate a plan to help the homebound portion of our congregation be nurtured while feeling connected to the rest of the congregation. I sense the loneliness, the isolation, and the desire to be a contributing part of the church that causes spiritual pain for those who can not be as active as they once were. I also feel their desire to be touched in a way that brings spiritual healing and "lovedliness," a word which I have coined to describe the love of Christ as expressed through human relationships and human touch.

With God's leadership and direction, I believe my package of strengths can be used to plan and implement a ministry for both the aging and the homebound through which they will know that they are not only loved by their fellow congregation, but that they are a valued integral part of the church's ministry.

I find myself at the crossroad, where I must choose between the ministry in which I am currently heavily invested (Jacob's Ladder Cooperative Christian Preschool Director) and the new one to which I believe God is calling me. My Connectedness brings to light the necessity of bridging a new leadership for the preschool so that God's program for the children and families in the community will be sustained during the transition to a new director. It is imperative that the congregation fully embrace Jacob's Ladder as an evangelistic ministry of the church and I believe helping that happen before moving on to a new ministry is part of my PMAP. I will need to trust God to show me the way to step down with "grace" and move forward with faith.

Assisting me in the process of transition is the support of a spiritual mentor, the courses at the ACL, and participation in a spiritual formation process. God has brought me into a relationship with a new friend in Christ with whom I can be honest and who can be equally honest with me. We pray together and her wisdom which I seek comes from a deeply committed relationship with God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Together she and I have formed a pray group which meets regularly to pray for our church, each other, and for our individual paths of service in the name of Jesus Christ. Prayer must be a leading factor in each step of the PMAP to which God has led me.

## **Phase 2 Impact of Strength Based Ministry to the Aging and Homebound**

*"This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."*(Philippians 3:13-14)

Our congregation is rich with the lives of many older members, some who are relatives of those who started our historic church. With the rapid influx of younger families, there seems to be both a sense of "fatigue" and disenfranchisement among the older adult members. Some feel they have "served their time" while others fear their "service" is no longer needed. There are some who now find it difficult to attend church let alone come out to help in the ministry programs. Others are in need of constant care and supervision which saps energy from family members. Even as we look at "Safe Sanctuary" policies to protect our children, we are considering how these policies can help protect our aging population. I believe that a new program, focused on ministry to both the aging and the homebound, can be a vital part of the congregational vision.

The activities required to develop the Ministry to the Aging and Homebound will include:

- ❖ Meet with Pastor Sandy and share the vision, my calling, the strengths I bring to the vision, and the support needed to implement the ministry

- ❖ Form a development team with the interest and skills required to design and implement the ministry
- ❖ Design a program that meets the needs of the individuals targeted by the ministry: the aging and the homebound, with support for their caregivers
- ❖ Integrate the new program under the umbrella of an existing ministry: Nurture Team (also Young Hearts)
- ❖ Gathering support of the CCoS
- ❖ Review current records to locate the target population of the church: the aging, those with dementia, those with conditions that require staying at home or in nursing facilities, those primary care givers needing relief support
- ❖ Invite congregation members gifted with nurturing skills to become a part of the ministry
- ❖ Train and educate those who will minister to the target population
- ❖ Nurture those who minister through an ongoing support group
- ❖ Give advanced notice of my eventual decline in active participation in Jacob's Ladder in 2009
- ❖ Implement a campaign of intentional awareness of the ministry of Jacob's Ladder and work toward increased spiritual and financial support for the preschool by the congregation

The new ministry includes several visions:

- ❖ Bringing the worship liturgy experience to the target community, establishing a library of recordings of the worship services and seeing that they are delivered in a timely manner to those unable to attend services would give the homebound an opportunity to experience the same worship service as the rest of the church community. Perhaps even listening to the service with the person or family might enrich their experience of community. Continuation of offering communion would be an integral part of bringing worship liturgy to these members.
- ❖ Visitation on a regular basis is also part of the vision. Listening to, praying with, or bringing a fresh conversation can be a blessing for the aging and homebound. The visitation team would be comprised of members of all ages, including young children.
- ❖ There may be need to develop a "bus ministry" that would provide transportation for those who require assistance to leave their home. Transportation aid could permit some to attend worship, fellowship meals, or other special programs of the church.
- ❖ Serving the primary care giver is also a part of the vision. Whether to simply allow the care giver to take a break or affording him or her an opportunity to be part of a ministry team, shop, attend meetings, or just relax, the ministry will include "companion sitting" services.

- ❖ Including the homebound on ministry teams is also in the vision. Those capable of making phone calls, preparing supplies for Sunday School or VBS, preparing mailings, sending care notes, or being on a prayer team would experience the joy of serving God and the local congregation even if done from their home.
- ❖ Providing material for at home study, simultaneous to small group studies being undertaken by the congregation would also be part of the vision that would include them in spiritual growth experiences.
- ❖ Providing occasional meals and eating with the homebound when appropriate is another vital part of the ministry.
- ❖ Maintaining a prayer list for the requests of the homebound and including them on the list to be contacted for prayer needs of others will serve an intercessory role in the vision. Delivery of “prayer bears” or prayer shawl would give recipients a visual reminder that they are included in prayers of the congregation. (They could be asked to pray for children in the Sunday school or preschool and youth in Confirmation and be given a magnet picture of that child. Their intercessory prayers could be a huge asset to all ministries of the church.)
- ❖ Touch, when appropriate, can be part of the ministry. Hand massages, holding hand, combing hair, these are all simply application of God’s love coming through human hands.
- ❖ Over time, a “day ‘care and share’ program” might be developed. This program could be developed for those with milder forms of dementia and may even grow into a service that could benefit the entire community. It would have music, exercise, conversation, games-all geared to connect the participants with themselves, their memories, and each other.
- ❖ Inevitably, some of the homebound are afflicted by terminal illness. Walking this path with the aged or terminally ill is a gift of this ministry. Listening to their concerns and affirming their life and decisions is an essential part of supporting the terminally ill.

For those who are aging but still able to be mobile there needs to be a plan to honor their membership in the body of Christ.

- ❖ Offering programs and excursions of interest to the aging. (Young Hearts already provides monthly gatherings.)
- ❖ Designating a special Sunday to celebrate “Older Adult Sunday.”
- ❖ Including older adults in worship by inviting them to give testimonies, offer prayers, serve as readers.

- ❖ Featuring “Seniors” in the newsletter or Memory Book.
- ❖ Asking “Seniors” to mentor (new members, confirmands, youth) and to participate on occasions in the preschool.

The impact of this ministry will touch the entire congregation. It can alleviate the isolation felt by those unable to attend church as well as build a bridge that has the possibility of expanding church programming. The rich heritage of the aging will not be lost, but will be honored as we continue to engage those who might feel disenfranchised in ministry. Those who are short or long term home bound will be included in the active life of the church and feel connected to their church family. The worship needs of the target community can be at least partially met by their being ministered to by lay members that can include children, youth and adults of all ages.

### **Phase 3 Theology and Accountability of Strength Based Ministry**

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:11-13)*

Continued prayer and meditation are major components of the ministry to which I believe God has called me. I believe that God has been revealing to me the need for inclusive ministry to the aging as well as to those homebound due to illness. The Holy Spirit has opened my eyes and my heart to see the pain and “aleness” of those unable to be a part of corporate worship. God, through the prophet Jeremiah, promised hope to not only the servant but to those who may no longer be able to serve. Jesus commands that we “feed” his sheep. I trusted God’s direction in the past as I discerned the need for a preschool in our church program. At every turn God provided for the needs of the preschool. Now I believe God is connecting what I have learned at Jacob’s Ladder to the other end of the spectrum of God’s children. In particular, God has shown me that many of the needs of His youngest children are very similar to the needs of His oldest children: to be nurtured, to be heard, to be fed, to be included and protected, to be needed, and to be held as precious. Jesus teaches that who ever comes to him with the heart of a child will be a part of the Kingdom.

There are many others who need to be included in the successful implementation of the vision. The initial organization team must comprise people with gifts for record keeping, financial planning, visioning and wooing support. Someone with the knowledge of those members who have been inactive due to health or age issues will be needed to help establish the target recipients.

A team skilled in training, specifically geared to the needs of the elderly and those facing illness which isolate them from activities, will be required to prepare those who will carry out the ministry. In addition, someone with the ability to encourage and support the visitation team on a regular basis will be essential.

Our existing Nurture Team has been interested in preparing the way for Stephens Ministry to be part of our program. I believe that this type of training would be an asset to the successful establishment of the ministry to the aging and homebound. I am particularly interested in the prospect of continuing ACL studies in the areas of Ministry to the Aging and Congregational Nurture. Contact with churches which already provide this type of ministry would also be beneficial.

I am currently active in a “Companions in Christ” group which, along with my spiritual mentor, would provide the support needed to sustain my energy and zeal to work through the vision. Seeking council of the pastor during both the planning and implementation stages is essential. I expect there will always be critics, particularly of new programming. There may even be resistance among those in the target population who are embarrassed by their condition.

The ministry program as well as those in the servant ministry would need to be evaluated. This evaluation can be done through surveys, conversations with the Pastor, feedback from the families involved, and from critical observance in the interest of the congregation to sustain the program. Ultimately, the ministry is accountable to God, the Creator, whose strength, direction, wisdom, and discernment must be constantly sought.

I do not know the time frame in which my PMAP will be fulfilled. I know that God has planted a seed, and God will furnish the support needed to build the ministry into something that will bring praise and honor to His name. I must be patient, allowing God to direct my life and to rule in my heart.

*“Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus....I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:4-7, 13)*

(List of benchmarks included)

## Schedule of Activities Supporting the PMAP

<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Date Implemented:</b>
Meet with Pastor Sandy to share vision	01/30/08 (1 <sup>st</sup> session)
Form development team (work with Pastor)	
Integrate within existing ministries	ongoing
Gather support of CCoS	
Review records to locate target population	
Inviting lay ministers to implement ministry (work with Pastor)	gift survey in process
Train and educate lay ministers	
Attend Stephen Ministry Workshop	02/23/08
Visit churches active in Senior Ministry	
ACL program @ Martin Methodist	Completed Basic 01/28/08
Specialized Tract	Begin 04/25/08
Bridging leadership to Jacob's Ladder	(working with Board of Directors)
Begin congregational education campaign	1 <sup>st</sup> Newsletter article March
Curriculum explanation	April Newsletter 08
Staff "gifts/talents"	May Newsletter 08
Book of Discipline explanation of childcare ministries	June Newsletter 08
Dedication of staff and birthday celebration	Worship service Sept. 08
Demographics of the outreach	September Newsletter 08
Interviews with participating families	October Newsletter 08