

WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling offers four consultation programs. The first three (SAA, AXIS, and MOSE) build upon one another and are intended to be used in individual congregations. The fourth (M4M) is intended to be used by a cluster of congregations in geographic proximity, exploring the feasibility and benefits of merging. A summary:

Self-Assessment & Adjustment Program (SAA)



The SAA program helps congregations clarify the current reality. Through a comprehensive pulse survey, the congregation identifies strengths and weaknesses of the current ministry efforts. Through demographic and ethnographic research, the congregation grows in understanding of its community and culture, determining possible ministry opportunities and threats. The SAA program culminates with communicant members coming together for a day of Scripture study and discussion about how to elevate ministry proficiency in key areas: worship, evangelism, discipleship, etc. The congregational counselor produces recommendations that suggest tactical adjustments to certain ministry efforts, based on the assessment of the members.

AXIS Program



The AXIS program helps congregations produce a long-range plan. The congregational counselor helps the congregation define their mission and commit to it. He aids them in clarifying their core values, the strongly-held convictions that drive mission and define how it will be carried out. The AXIS program also involves congregation-wide listening sessions aimed at helping a congregational strategic planning team articulate the congregation's vision of a desired future. The counselor works with the strategic planning team to produce a prioritized list of goals that drive toward the vision, as well as annual objectives that fulfill those goals.

Ministry Organization & Staffing Evaluation (MOSE)



The MOSE program evaluates the human resource needs required to carry out tactical and strategic plans effectively. The congregational counselor works with church leadership to assess member ministry expectations as well as volunteerism capacity. Through a series of interviews, the congregational counselor attempts to gauge the efficiency of and satisfaction with congregational governance and management. The MOSE program also appraises the skill sets and interests of called workers and hired staff in an effort to align those gifts and interests to the tasks and responsibilities delineated in the congregation's long-term plan.

Merging for Mission (M4M)



The M4M program provides a process for two or more congregations in a geographic proximity to explore the feasibility and potential benefits of merging into a single entity. The congregational counselor helps the participating congregations better understand the demographic and ethnographic realities of the area. The counselor helps the participating congregations clarify their core values and philosophy of ministry to see if a happy merge is possible. If it is deemed possible, the counselor helps the congregations assess the best possible structure for a merge: restart merger, absorption merger, multi-site merger, etc. Working with a joint leadership team, the counselor helps the congregations in the M4M program produce a long-term strategy for a merged ministry effort.

NOTE: The Commission on Lutheran Schools also offers a number of different consultation programs designed to dovetail with the programs described above when a congregation also has a Lutheran elementary school and/or some sort of early childhood ministry.



Self-Assessment & Adjustment Program (SAA)

Target

The SAA program is for congregations that want to a) assess current ministry programs, b) better understand their community in their effort to plan ministry strategy, and c) make tactical adjustments deemed necessary to enhance current ministry efforts.

Process

Phase 1: Research (three months)

- Phase Two weekend is promoted
- A congregational profile is produced
- A statistical profile is compiled
- Demographic/ethnographic research is conducted
- A congregation-wide pulse survey is conducted
- Exit surveys are conducted

Phase 2: Assessment (one month)

- Counselor leads Saturday Bible study
- Counselor facilitates breakout group discussion of ministry efforts

- Counselor leads Sunday assessment of ministry efforts
- Counselor produces list of tactical recommendations based on congregation's self-analysis and assessment

Phase 3: Implementation (three to six months)

- Counselor works with congregation, offering ongoing encouragement, as congregation implements the tactical adjustments
- If necessary, the counselor provides congregation with additional tools/resources to aid with ministry adjustments

Desired Outcomes

- The congregation better understands its ministry context; i.e. the people of the community that Christ has called that congregation to attempt to reach with the gospel. This understanding helps shape future strategy.
- The congregation implements tactical changes in key ministry areas which the membership deemed necessary. These changes elevate proficiency in those areas.

Prerequisite

There are no prerequisites for the SAA program.

Costs/Fees

Enrollment in the SAA program is \$800 to \$1600, depending on communicant membership. The congregation is responsible for the printing of certain assessment tools utilized in the three phases. If the congregation has a Lutheran elementary school or early childhood ministry, the counselor may deem it necessary for those ministries to be assessed by the Commission on Lutheran Schools, which is a separate fee. Financial assistance is available in some circumstances.



AXIS Program

Target

The AXIS program is for congregations that want to produce a long-range/strategic plan to direct their ministry efforts.

Process

Phase 1: Preparation and Analysis Phase *(one to two months)*

- A Strategic Planning Team (SPT) is recruited; it is trained by the assigned counselor
- Counselor leads the SPT in conducting “deep-dive” analyses: statistical, demographic, ethnographic, ministry efforts
- Congregational membership listening sessions are held by SPT and counselor
- Counselor works with pastor(s) to plan a spiritual program aimed at “commitment to mission”

Phase 2: Mission, Values, Vision *(one to two months)*

- Commitment to mission program held
- Counselor works with SPT to produce/update mission statement
- Counselor works with SPT and congregational leadership to clarify actual values
- Counselor works with SPT to produce aspirational values list

- Counselor works with SPT to produce a vision document delineating the “desired future”
- Mission, core values, and vision are disseminated, discussed, and approved by congregation

Phase 3: Goals and Objectives *(one to two months)*

- Counselor works with appropriate boards, committees, and teams to establish and prioritize the long-range goals that drive towards vision
- Goals are reviewed by SPT and congregational leadership; any necessary adjustments made
- Counselor works with appropriate boards, committees, and teams establish SMART objectives that take the steps needed to achieve goals
- Goals and SMART objectives are disseminated, discussed, and approved by congregation

Desired Outcomes

- The congregation has a long-range plan that aims at a desired future. It includes SMART objectives which form the foundation for annual ministry planning.
- Congregational plans achieve more than operational efficiency. They serve a motivational purpose, aiding in volunteerism. They also help to achieve desired strategic transformation.

Prerequisite

The congregation has completed the Self-Assessment and Adjustment (or similar) program.

Costs/Fees

Enrollment in the AXIS program is \$1800 to \$3600, depending on communicant membership. If the congregation has a Lutheran elementary school or early childhood ministry, the counselor may deem it necessary for those ministries to consult with the Commission on Lutheran Schools in the setting of goals and objectives, which is a separate fee. Financial assistance is available in some circumstances.



Ministry Organization and Staffing Evaluation (MOSE)

Target

MOSE is for congregations that seek to better understand what human resources are needed to implement strategic and tactical plans. MOSE determines the quantity and types of services that are available through congregational volunteerism. MOSE assesses the interests and skills of called workers and staff and attempts to align them with congregational goals and objectives. Finally, MOSE assesses congregational governance, organization, and operational systems and, if necessary, makes recommendations for adjustments, in an effort to optimize plan management.

Process

Component A: Plan evaluation (one month)

- Counselor evaluates congregational plans to assess needed man-hours
- Counselor consults with called workers, staff, and leadership to produce ministry time matrix
- Counselor works with called workers, staff, and leadership to evaluate current congregational systems

Component B: Volunteerism evaluation (one month)

- Comprehensive time and talent survey is conducted
- Counselor produces analysis of the congregation's volunteerism potential

Component C: Staffing evaluation (one to three months)

- Counselor conducts interviews of called workers and staff regarding their interests, personal assessment of skill sets, and current responsibilities
- Counselor conducts interviews with cross section of members about perceptions of staffing alignment
- Called workers and staff keep time diaries for two to three weeks
- Called workers and staff take Gallup's *CliftonStrengths* assessment

- Counselor produces initial assessment of sizing, strengths, and alignment of staff

Component D: Organizational evaluation (one month)

- Counselor conducts survey of appropriate council, board, and team members
- Counselor produces evaluation of congregational governance/structure

Final Component: Recommendations & Training (one to two months)

- Counselor and congregational leaders discuss preliminary evaluations
- Counselor produces final recommendations
- Final recommendations are disseminated, discussed, and adopted
- Counselor works with congregational leaders to produce an action plan to make adjustments
- If needed, counselor provides plan management training to appropriate council, board, and team members (VTO process)

Desired Outcomes

- The congregation has the correct human resources in place and rightly aligned to carry out their strategic and tactical plans.
- Volunteerism within the congregation is maximized.
- Congregational workers and staff experience greater joy and productivity in their ministries.
- Governance, organization, and systems effectively meet congregational goals.

Prerequisite

The congregation has comprehensive long-range and annual ministry plans and/or has completed the AXIS program.

Costs/Fees

Enrollment in MOSE is \$2400 to \$4800, depending on a) communicant membership and b) the number of called workers and staff that serve the congregation. The congregation is also responsible for the fees for each of the *CliftonStrengths* assessments (about \$40 per person). Financial assistance is available in some circumstances.



Merging for Mission (M4M)

Target

M4M helps congregations located in geographic proximity consider whether conducting ministry together in some manner might better serve the kingdom of God than operating independently. If the participating congregations determine it would be beneficial to work together or even merge, the M4M program guides the planning and logistics of that partnership.

Process

Phase 1: Exploration & Initial Assessment

(one to two months)

- Statistical analysis of participating congregations is conducted.
- Demographic and ethnographic analysis of ministry area is performed, including community interviews.
- SWOT analysis of participating congregations is performed.

Phase 2: Commitment to Mission *(one month)*

- Program of spiritual encouragement is conducted.
- The counselor presents explanation of merger types to each participating congregation.

Phase 3: Clarification of Values & Philosophy

(one to two months)

- The counselor works with the leadership of each participating congregation to determine if a common set of core values and key ministry tasks can be identified.
- The counselor works with all called workers from participating congregations to align ministry philosophies.
- Called workers from all participating congregations use Clifton *StrengthsFinders* assessment. Counselor serves as facilitator to discuss assessment.

Phase 4: Strategy and Structure

(two to three months)

- The counselor facilitates a joint strategic planning team's production of a mission statement and vision document for the merged entity.
- The counselor facilitates the joint strategic planning team's production of long-range goals and corresponding annual objectives.
- The counselor facilitates as the leadership teams of the participating congregations produce position descriptions required in the merged entity.
- The joint strategic planning team begins production on a facility plan for the merged entity.
- The merge plan is presented to participating congregations for approval.

Phase 5: Merger Logistics & Implementatio

(one to two months)

- An action plan is produced to carry out the legal and logistical steps necessary for the approved merger to take place.
- A church governance that fits the strategy and structure of the merged entity is enacted.
- Congregational officers for the new entity are elected and installed.

Desired Outcomes

- The congregations partner in ministry in whatever way they feel best serves their area with the gospel.
- NOTE: The counselor has no predisposition regarding the type of merger. Churches in the M4M program may decide to remain independent yet conduct certain aspects of ministry together. Other churches may decide to function as a multisite. Other churches may decide to combine on one campus. The counselor guides the process of the M4M program. The members determine the outcome.

Prerequisite

There are no prerequisites. Congregations considering the M4M program may request a counselor to explain the program more fully in person. This is done at no cost to the congregations.

Costs/Fees

Enrollment in M4M is \$2000 to \$5200, depending on a) communicant membership of the participating congregations and b) how many phases the participating congregations engage in. (There are a number of times in M4M where a congregation may decide that any sort of merger is not feasible for them and subsequently discontinue to the program.)