

“Tell the World”

Somali Outreach Discernment Plan

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Eden Prairie, MN

September – October 2003

Prepared by

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen

The purpose of this plan is to develop a ministry of outreach by learning about Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie and by discerning how the congregation might witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ through mutual dialogue and personal interaction with Somali immigrants.

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Background

A. Demographic Information

1. Eden Prairie

Eden Prairie is a suburban community of 55,000 people located in the southwest corner of Hennepin County, Minnesota. It is about 18 miles from downtown Minneapolis and 20 miles from St. Paul. The “Major Center Area” (effectively Eden Prairie’s downtown) is located around the interchange of I-494 and U.S. Highways 169 and 212. Because of its strategic location and available land, hundreds of new companies have moved into the area in the last 10 years.¹

The median family income in Eden Prairie in 1999 was \$93,258.² Eden Prairie families in poverty are 2.8% of the total population.³ But of the Eden Prairie non-citizens, 17% are living in poverty,⁴ and of Eden Prairie’s children in female-headed families, 19% are in poverty.⁵

The median housing price in 2001 was \$220,000.⁶ Most of the Eden Prairie immigrant population seems to live in rental housing. The median gross rent in Eden Prairie was \$883 per month, according to the 2000 census.⁷

“Nearly 10% of [Eden Prairie] residents are immigrants, with origins from around the world.”⁸ Many immigrants work in entry-level jobs, regardless of their educational or occupational backgrounds. The median hourly wages of selected jobs in the Twin Cities area are:

Child Care Workers	\$ 8.52
Cooks, Fast Food	7.62
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	11.83
Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs	9.99
Waiters, Waitresses	6.55 ⁹

A taxi driver working 40 hours per week and earning the median wage will earn approximately \$20,000 annually. At the median rent for Eden Prairie (\$10,596 annually), *half* of the taxi driver’s income will go toward housing alone.

Many immigrant wage earners, out of necessity, must work more than one job. Implications of multiple-job workers are less time for education and career enhancement activities, less time for family responsibilities, and less time for community involvement.

¹ *The EP Community Development Recorder*, Vol.5, Issue 1, January 1, 2003.

² *Census 2000 For the City of Eden Prairie*, Table DP-3 “Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics.”

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Eden Prairie Quick Facts.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *The EP Community Development Recorder*.

⁷ *Census 2000 For the City of Eden Prairie*, Table DP-4 “Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics.”

⁸ Hennepin South Services Collaborative. *Demographic Studies and Population Analysis: Revised*, February 28, 2003, p.28.

⁹ Minneapolis-Saint Paul MN-WI MSA Wage Estimates Updated to Second Quarter 2003, http://www.mnwfc.org/lmi/salary/s1/m_detail/2702005120code.htm.

2. Somali Immigrants

Ninety percent of Somali immigrants arrived in the United States in the 1990s. Sixty-two percent lived elsewhere before moving to Minnesota. The Somali population is young, with 49% of the immigrants between the ages of 18 and 29 years.¹⁰

Sixty-six percent of them have at least a high school education, and 22% have a 4-year college degree or higher.¹¹ Three-fourths of Somali immigrants say they can read or understand the newspaper.¹² Those reporting they can speak and understand English very well are 39%, while 11% can't speak English at all.¹³

Because of licensing requirements in this country, many immigrants are not able to work in the occupations in they held in their country of origin. They take jobs for which they are otherwise overqualified. They then often feel demeaned, frustrated and embarrassed.

Religious affiliations of the Somali immigrants, self-defined, are 81% Muslim, 14% Christian, and 5% other or no religious affiliation.¹⁴

The greatest sources of stress reported by Somali immigrants are:

Language barrier	26%
Separation from family/friends	8%
Health problems	7%
Money problems	7%
Jobs (finding, keeping)	7%
Homesickness/isolation	6%
Raising children	6% ¹⁵

In 2002 the Wilder Research Center interviewed Somali immigrants on issues of welfare and employment. Somalis reported “widespread religious discrimination in getting a job and in the workplace.”¹⁶ Religious discrimination might be due to employer misunderstanding or insensitivity to Muslim prayer practices and holidays. Also, backlash on all Muslims because of the events of September 11, 2001, might be reflected in the comments. Language barriers make it difficult to protect their rights.

Language barriers also “make it difficult for Somali welfare participants to read MFIP [Minnesota Family Investment Program, the state’s welfare program] forms and notices, with the result that they may miss meetings, they may not understand rules and requirements, they may not know about possible benefits and help.”¹⁷ Many Somalis, therefore, do not receive the public assistance that is available.

A further complication is that some immigrants are not able to read or write in their native Somali.

¹⁰ Wilder Research Center. *Speaking for Themselves: A survey of Hispanic, Hmong, Russian, and Somali immigrants in Minneapolis-Saint Paul*. November 2000, p.17.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p.8.

¹³ Ibid., p.17.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.12.

¹⁶ Wilder Research Center. *Summary: The issues behind the outcomes for Somali welfare participants*. April 2003, p.3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

B. Rationale for Outreach to Somali Immigrants

Somalis are our neighbors. We are in frequent contact with them at stores, in parks, at work and at school. To improve the quality of life in Eden Prairie for all residents, it is necessary to improve the quality of life of particular people, such as Somalis.

Of the different immigrant groups in Eden Prairie, Somalis are the most recent. As a consequence of this and other factors, they are the least assimilated and have the fewest available social supports.

It is the general consensus of local social service agencies that the Somalis are the most underserved. Language, culture, religion, history all contain barriers to efficient service delivery.

There are few Eden Prairie congregations ministering directly to Somalis. Most churches seem to focus their ministry and evangelism on the population most like their membership. Immanuel Lutheran Church has an opportunity to partner in particular with Pax Christi Catholic Community and with Eden Prairie Presbyterian Church in our mutual desire to minister with Somalis.

It is our Christian imperative to minister to Somali immigrants. (See “Theological Assertions,” page 5).

C. Immanuel Lutheran Church Decision Process

Immanuel Lutheran Church is in its third year of a six-year spiritual development program. Year 3 is “Tell the World” and begins September 2003.

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen was called as Interim Associate Pastor in March 2003. The congregation leadership took note of his experience as consultant to nonprofit organizations and directed him to develop the congregation’s ministry to Eden Prairie immigrants.

Through many interviews with social service providers, with local congregation staff and with government agencies, it became evident that the immigrant population with greatest social need currently is the Somalis.

Beginning in May 2003, the Immanuel Lutheran Church congregation was introduced to the opportunity for immigrant ministry through sermons, worship announcements, committee discussions and personal contacts.

The Tent Meeting worship weekend, September 6th and 7th, began the year’s theme of “Tell the World.” In September and October 2003, a series of discussions will be held to discern precisely how this congregation will “tell the world” regarding the Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie.

The last two events in the *Discussions on Somali Outreach* series will discern the purpose and method of the ministry. Key “champions” will then plan and foster the ministry, beginning in November.

Cultural Awareness Training ought to be an early part of the plan. Juan Moreno, a member of the congregation whose occupation is to do such training with the University of Minnesota, is willing to conduct the event early in 2004.

Theological Assertions

1. Witnessing to God's goodness and glory is a passionate desire of faith.

*I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and his glory, O Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know its true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.*¹⁸

- a. The greatness of the Lord pours forth from faithful lips.
Psalm 145
- b. Faith longs for the revelation of God.
Isaiah 64:1 "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence..."
- c. Redemption by Jesus drives us to care for God's people.
John 21:15-17, Acts 1:1-47, Peter is restored by Jesus and witnesses.

2. We have good news for others.

*I love to tell the story: how pleasant to repeat
What seems each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word.*

- a. We share the love that God first gave us.
John 15:12
Love that is more than pleasant feelings, but also the joy of knowing Jesus, seeking justice and well-being of others, and mutual growth that comes from being in community with one another.
- b. We are commanded to make disciples of all nations.
Matthew 28:18-20
The church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, not disciples of some generalized deity or other ideals. In making disciples of Jesus, the church participates in the redeeming of people from self-centeredness, moving them to other-focused care.
- c. "All nations" include Muslims and Somalis, in whatever country they might be.
- d. We serve Jesus by caring for those in greatest need.
Matthew 25:31-46

3. Our own faith longs to hear the good news again.

*I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to heart it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
I'll sing the old, old story that I have loved so long.*

- a. Faith knowledge is strengthened when taught to others.

¹⁸ Katherine Hankey, "I Love to Tell the Story."

Romans 10:6-13

- b. The telling is part of relationship-building, and the beginning of community.
Romans 10:14-15

4. Strangers are fellow human beings.

Genesis 1:27 Isaiah 43:6-7

- a. All people are created in God's image.
- b. Our neighbors from other lands, cultures and experiences have the same passions, the same ambitions, the same needs as we ourselves do.
- c. The similarities of people across cultures are greater than our differences.

5. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18

- a. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls Christians to mutual understanding and friendship with Muslim people in the United States and around the world. By learning about Islam and seeking opportunities to know Muslim people better, we bear witness to God's saving love incarnate in Jesus.* ELCA Division for Global Mission. www.elca.org/dgm/resource/muslim.html.
- b. By learning about Islam and the history of Somalia, we respect and begin to build community with our Somali neighbors.
- c. When we engage Somalis in mutual discussions we understand our own faith better.
- d. When we engage Somalis in fellowship events we witness to our own faith.

6. God is known as "Yahweh," the LORD, the one who delivered from Egypt.

Exodus 20:2-3

- a. Yahweh is therefore not some generic "god," interchangeable or impersonal.
- b. "Your God" emphasizes our exclusive relationship to Yahweh.
- c. The exodus defines who our God is, the one who delivers from slavery.
- d. Jesus delivers finally from sin and evil.

7. A Method of making disciples.

Leviticus 19:33-34

- a. Making disciples can be through that of providing biblical hospitality to strangers (see Patrick Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger*).
- b. Engaging people of other beliefs in mutual, hospitable conversation will be more effective for making disciples than that of theological conquest or rational debate or consumerism or western culture.
- c. Mutual conversation, however well-intended on our part, requires reciprocal engagement which might not be forthcoming. Yet our responsibility is to witness, not to convince or to convert. It is up to the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of others to mutual conversation.
- d. Hospitality and mutual conversation risks:
 - i. making one's private faith available for public critique,
 - ii. abuse by the other,

- iii. discomfort over the uncertainty of what was once reliable and sure,
- iv. change in identity and self-understanding,
- v. heresy, syncretism, pluralism.

However, the risks are acceptable for the Lord calls us to engage the stranger, this is the Lord's mission and ministry, the Lord will not fail, and in the end it is the Lord who is honored and glorified.

8. We discern the Lord's will by mutual conversation.

Acts 15:1-29

- a. Through reading of scripture, conversation with God in prayer, circumstances in our community, and discussions with one another we discern God's will and our part in God's plan.
- b. Everyone has access to God by virtue of Jesus Christ, yet our humanity clouds our insight. As each shares their own understanding as best as possible, common themes and direction emerge.
- c. Each person is crucial to complete understanding of God's will.
- d. One might go so far as to say that full understanding of God would require mutual conversation across faith traditions.

Calendar (2003)

Pre-Planning

- May 11,18,25 Bulletin announcements for “Befrienders” to answer questions self-designated Somali immigrants might have about navigating Eden Prairie community and culture. 16 individuals signed up. Although “Befrienders” ministry did not develop, the list of interested people serves as foundation for the Somali outreach planning that follows.
- May 25 Sermon on the 6th Sunday of Easter: *Immigrants in Eden Prairie* (see Appendix 1).
- June 9 Meeting of interested church members, Social Ministry Committee, Evangelism Committee and Council to discuss concerns about the Immanuel Lutheran Church plans for outreach to Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie. From the discussion was derived the *Somali Outreach Plan* (see Appendix 2).
- August Presentations to council, Social Concerns Committee, Evangelism Committee, Adult Education Committee and staff.
- August 18 News releases announcing “Discussions on Somali Outreach” and “Tent Meeting” (see Appendix 3).
- August 24 Sermon on the 11th Sunday of Pentecost: *From Comfort to Blessing* (see Appendix 4).
- September 5 Church newsletter article about “Discussions on Somali Outreach” (see Appendix 5).

Tent Meeting: *Tell the World*

- Sept. 6, 7 Tent Meeting began with Saturday Worship, 5:00 PM, followed by an ice cream social. The purpose of the event was to introduce next year’s theme “Tell the World.” Saturday worship was a traditional tent meeting-style worship outdoors where the entire community of Eden Prairie was invited. A guest evangelist, The Rev. Cherian Puthiyottil of Agora Ministries preached, with Mt. Horeb Church (Minneapolis) congregation and praise band leading worship. The worship was in English and Spanish (see Appendix 6).

Sunday morning worship continued the theme of the Saturday worship with the Senior Pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Paul Nelson, preaching on the coming year’s theme. Worship was again outdoors, with music by the church’s Servant Song band, Immanuel Gospel Choir, Trinity Choir and Ascension Choir. Saturday worship attendance was 225 and Sunday worship attendance was 607.

Discussions on Somali Outreach

Thursdays 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall.

The event is under the auspices of the Adult Education Committee. This discernment process will be one way to determine how Immanuel Lutheran Church will "Tell the World."

- Sept. 25 Somali Immigrant Culture and History
Ahmed Elmi, Lutheran Social Service, Refugee Dept.
- Oct. 2 Eden Prairie Services to Somali Immigrants
Nancy Holden, PROP of Eden Prairie
Khadre Duale, Family and Children's Service
Several local Somali families
- Oct. 9 Islam Basics and "Bearing Witness by Mutual Engagement"
Mark N. Swanson, Luther Seminary
- Oct. 16 Considerations for Witnessing with Somalis
Cherian Puthiyottil, AGORA Ministries
- Oct. 23 ILC's Ministry with Somali Immigrants: Group Discernment
- Oct. 30 ILC Somali Ministry Plan: opportunities and charting a strategy

Possible Ministry Opportunities

1. Men of Faith: Muslims and Christians in Conversation

Men of Immanuel Lutheran Church and Islam men meet to discuss such topics as names and descriptions of God, practices and forms of worship, prayer and its function, what God is doing through our faiths in the world, how people of different faiths might live in community.

2. Women with Women Ministry

Women of Immanuel Lutheran Church and Somali women in the community engage in joint projects to facilitate conversation. Because of the role and expectations of women in Islamic culture, all-women events might be best at least initially.

3. Parish Health Advocate

Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches is proposing a program to create community-based healthcare services to people impacted by poverty, as well as immigrant populations and people of color. The program will offer technical assistance and grants to participating congregations.

4. Tutoring

Forest Hills Elementary School and Eden Lake Elementary School have a shortage of adult volunteers to assist students with reading, math, etc. The shortage is due to the large population of immigrant students, whose parents do not yet have the cultural expectation of parents volunteering at schools.

Cultural Awareness Training

Sensitivity to differences in meanings, gestures, values and behaviors across cultures will facilitate effective outreach ministry. Awareness of cultural differences should explore such issues as:

- customs and traditions
- religious practices and holidays
- manners
- core values
- body language
- education and skills
- conflict styles
- social interaction norms
- view of authority
- community structure
- family structure and roles
- world view
- understanding of time and punctuality
- perception of American culture
- skills to overcome misunderstandings

Juan Moreno, a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, provides such training for the University of Minnesota. He is willing to conduct educational events for Immanuel Lutheran Church.

Nanette Missaghi is Human Resources and Diversity Coordinator for Eden Prairie Schools. Her staff has developed a program of cultural sensitivity training for the employees of the public schools in Eden Prairie. She is another available resource. Her telephone number is 952-975-7000, and email nmissaghi@edenpr.org.

Tell the World: Discussions on Somali Outreach

Adult Education Committee

Thursdays 7:00-8:30 PM

Other congregations that have an interest in outreach to Somali immigrants, and who have an interest in possible partnership with Immanuel Lutheran Church, are
Eden Prairie Presbyterian Church,
Pax Christi Catholic Community,
and Prairie Lutheran Church.

Sept. 25 Somali Immigrant Culture and History

Ahmed Elmi, Lutheran Social Service, Refugee Dept.
612-871-0221

Goal: to inform participants about the Somalis' experiences immigrating to Eden Prairie.

A. History

1. Recent history of Somalia.
2. Reasons for people leaving Somalia.
3. How Somalis came to settle in Eden Prairie.

B. Somali Culture

1. What are the characteristics of Somali families?
2. What are the core values of Somali culture?
3. In what ways is it difficult for Somalis to hold fast to their values in American culture?
4. What is the cuisine of Somalia?
Are the immigrants able to prepare the same kind of food here?
5. What role does religion play in their life?
6. What is the educational system of Somalia?

C. Current Experience

1. How are Somalis received in Eden Prairie?
2. What are the particular challenges of immigrating to the USA?
3. What are the particular challenges of Somali children in American schools?
4. What are the major cultural adjustments Somalis have had to make in adjusting to life in Eden Prairie?
5. What kind of jobs are Somalis able to find in the Twin Cities?
6. Are the jobs they secure similar to their work experience in Somalia?
7. Do the jobs they secure match their skills and abilities?
8. What are the particular challenges to Somali families in Eden Prairie?

D. Blessing of Somalis Among Us

1. What can we learn from the Somali immigrant experience?
2. What benefit of Somali culture and religion can we gain?
3. How are Somalis a blessing to Eden Prairie?

Oct. 2 Eden Prairie Services to Somali Immigrants

Nancy Holden, PROP of Eden Prairie, 952-294-5970

Khadre Duale, Family and Children's Service

Several local Somali families

Goal: to learn of existing programs serving Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie and the opportunities for Immanuel Lutheran Church.

1. What are the social needs of Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie?
2. What agencies and services are currently assisting Somali immigrants?
3. What needs are currently going unmet?
4. What are the possibilities for Immanuel Lutheran Church?

Oct. 9 Islam Basics and “Bearing Witness by Mutual Engagement”

Mark Swanson, Assoc. Prof. of Islamic Studies, Luther Seminary

651-641-3227

Goal: to learn the basics of Islam and how to engage Muslims in conversation with hospitality, respect and openness to new insight.

A. Islam

1. Is the one we know as the Lord the same god as Allah?
2. What are the basic principals of Islam?
3. How does Islam function in family and community life?
4. Is there any variation in how Somalis practice Islam from that of other Muslim ethnic groups?
5. How is the role of Islam in communities different from that of the role of Christianity?
6. What part do mosque communities play in the settlement of immigrants?

B. Evangelism

1. What is “evangelism?”
2. What different ways are there to evangelize?
3. What are the outcomes expected from evangelism?
4. Why engage Muslims in some sort of evangelical effort?
5. What are the particular challenges in evangelizing Muslims?

C. Christians and Muslims in Eden Prairie

1. How might ILC build community between Muslims and the rest of Eden Prairie?
2. What benefit or blessing might we see from ministry with Muslims?
3. How might ILC begin engaging Muslims in mutual conversation?

Oct. 16 Considerations for Witnessing with Somalis
Cherian Puthiyottil, AGORA Ministries, Inc.
612-604-0587

Goal: to be aware of potential misunderstandings due to cultural differences, to learn skills in ministering cross-culturally, and to identify methods of connecting Immanuel Lutheran Church and the Somalis in Eden Prairie.

- A. Common misunderstandings that occur because of cultural differences.
 - 1. List common misunderstandings.
 - 2. Identify ways to prevent or overcome misunderstandings.
 - 3. Identify procedures for handling confusing or difficult circumstances.

- B. Skills in ministering cross-culturally with Somalis.
 - 1. Customs, manners, traditions.
 - 2. Core values and religious teachings.
 - 3. Attentiveness: listen, ask questions, be open to alternative methods, respect other points of view.
 - 4. Body language.
 - 5. Gender roles and norms.
 - 6. Handling faux pas.
 - 7. Conflict styles.

- C. Connecting Immanuel Lutheran Church and Somalis in Eden Prairie.

Options:

 - 1. Person-to-person.
 - 2. Intermediary, such as an AGORA missionary.
 - 3. Social service agency partnership.
 - 4. Minimal, only funding needs through agencies.

Oct. 23 ILC's Purpose to Somali Immigrants: Group Discernment

Goal: to identify *what* Immanuel Lutheran Church's outreach to Somali immigrants shall be.

- A. What is God doing?
 - 1. What is God already doing among Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie?
 - 2. What is God asking Immanuel Lutheran Church to do?

- B. What are the intended results of this congregation's outreach ministry?
 - help people in need
 - serve unmet needs, in cooperation with other social agencies
 - witness to Christian faith

- i. listen to immigrants' faith
- ii. share own faith
- iii. build trust while holding differing views
- find common ground for community (basic humanity)
- convert Muslims to Christianity
- integrate and assimilate Somalis into Eden Prairie,
which would change the identity of Eden Prairie
(see John Renard, 101 Questions and Answers on Islam, pp.114ff.)

- C. What barriers exist in the congregation of Immanuel Lutheran Church that might prevent effective ministry with Somali immigrants?
- D. What does this congregation need from God to carry out its ministry with Somalis?

Oct. 30 ILC Somali Ministry Plan

Goal: to agree on action steps as to *how* to carry out ministry with Somalis.

- A. Having identified what this congregation's ministry with Somalis is to be, begin charting a strategy on how to carry it out.
- B. Identify resources needed to accomplish the outreach ministry:
1. leaders from within the congregation
 2. collaborators outside of the congregation.
 3. list of local agencies and the services they provide
 4. support group for volunteers
 5. funding, and include in the congregation's budget planning cycle
- C. Develop strategy for addressing barriers.
1. Identify potential barriers to carrying out the ministry.
 2. Identify ways to address those barriers.
 3. Possible Models:
 - a. Official representatives in dialogue for understanding
 - b. Academic discussion of theological issues
 - c. Parent-to-parent discussion on common family issues
 - d. Youth-with-youth study on religious differences/similarities
- D. Decide on action steps and create goals to achieve them.
- E. Create a timeline for goal completion.
- F. Establish an evaluation process.

Budget

Tentmeeting		
Evangelism	promotion/ mailing	\$ 250
Worship Music Arts	music (loose offering)	632
Worship Music Arts	speaker	300
	travel	-0-
	tent rent	2,532
	chairs rent	466
	sound equipment rent	400
	food	1,013
	misc.: bulletins, fans	200
	signage	80
	security	40
	<i>Total</i>	<i>\$5,913</i>

Tell the World: Discussions on Somali Outreach		
Adult Ed. Committee	speakers (2 @ \$100, 1@ \$125)	325

Not Budgeted:
Somali Outreach Ministry in 2004
Cultural Awareness Training
AGORA Ministry partnership support

***List of Some Agencies Serving Local Somalis
and other pertinent organizations***

Agora Ministries

122 W. Franklin Ave., Suite 604
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612-604-0587

Rev. Cherian Puthiyottil, Dir.

Agora is not itself an outreach or mission program, but a means for congregations to serve other cultures. It offers an array of assistance to congregations to facilitate cross-cultural ministry.

Lutheran Immigration and Resettlement

LIR, which is a national organization that processes immigrants, works through Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota

Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota

Refugee Department
2414 Park Ave.
Mpls. MN 55404
612-871-0221

Ben Wallen is the contact for immigration information (612-879-5258).

LSS provides assistance to immigrants for their initial 3 months upon arrival. A case worker provides direct services to the immigrants, assisting with enrolling children in school, getting adults into ESL classes, navigating the county welfare system, giving referrals and assistance finding employment through Minnesota Family Investment program (employment assistance).

Immigrant Services

Coordinator is Amy Libman, Volunteer Connection
952-681-6116

amy_libman@mindquest.bloomington.k12.mn.us

Immigrant Services is a coordinating meeting of service providers in Eden Prairie. They meet the 1st Monday of every month, 11:00-12:30, at Eden Prairie Library.

Family and Children's Service

9201 E. Bloomington Frwy, Suite Q
Bloomington, MN 55420-3437
612-703-7132

www.famchildserv.org

FCS is an independent nonprofit organization serving MN since 1848, providing services similar to L.S.S. Khadra Duale, Case Manager, is the primary contact for services to Somalis. Peter Hartwich is the contact person for Support Teams which is a program of arranging a variety of supports tailored to each client family. Jennifer Blevins, 612-341-1616, is a source of information on jobs and

housing issues of Somali immigrants.

People Reaching Out to Other People (PROP)

8080 Mitchell Rd., Suite 102

Eden Prairie, MN 55344

952-937-9120

Nancy Holden, Director

PROP is an Eden Prairie organization serving people in need. Located in the City Center it operates a food shelf, and information and referral service, transportation assistance, children's clothing closet, emergency financial assistance, and seasonal programs. PROP also serves as the community's primary referral service to other agencies.

Pax Christi Catholic Community

12100 Pioneer Trail

Eden Prairie, MN 55347

952-941-3150

Susan McKenna is lay minister for social concerns and the lead contact regarding immigrant ministries at Pax Christi. The congregation hosts a Muslim worshipping community. They will live out their faith in service, but do not seek to witness to Muslims. Pax Christi is interested in cooperative ministry with ILC and Eden Prairie Presbyterian Church.

Eden Prairie Presbyterian Church

9145 Eden Prairie Road

Eden Prairie, MN 55347

952-975-1900

www.eppc.com

Rev. Matt Marzluft

matt@eppc.com

EPPC currently is going through staff changes and has tentatively set aside planning for immigrant outreach. Matt welcomes opportunities to work with ILC and Pax Christi in the ministry to immigrants. EPPC is also exploring how to use the Rev. Yaqub Mohamed of Somerv, Inc. as their evangelist to Somalis.

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church

2315 Chicago Ave.

Minneapolis, MN 55404

612-871-2967

The Rev. Janet Tidemann

Immigrants of various nationalities, including Somali are tutored in math, English and computers through the Minnesota Literacy Project. About 200-300 people are tutored per week. The church also provides dedicated rooms for the Muslims to pray. No evangelism of the immigrants takes place.

Lutheran Church of Peace

47 S. Century Blvd.
Maplewood, MN 55119
651-739-7094

The Rev. Mark Becker

The congregation has a ministry to Somali immigrants in an neighboring apartment complex. The congregation began ministry with Somalis by hosting a dinner and inviting Somalis in the apartment complex. From that event direct, personal relationships between church members and Somali began. Out of discussions with Somali neighbors, the church develops social services most appropriate to the local Somalis. The outreach intent is that of “befriending,” with evangelism being that of relationship building and mutual witnessing. The congregation also assists with legal issues regarding apartment housing. One incident was between the apartment manager who is a Somali immigrant of a tribe that was at war in Somalia with the tribe of the majority of dwellers in the apartment complex he now manages. The church also collected over 100 bicycles, fixed them and then donated them to the families in the apartments.

Hennepin South Services Collaborative

5701 Normandale Rd., Suite 302
Eden Prairie, MN
952-922-5999

Emily Schug, x21

www.shfsc.org

Hennepin South Services Collaborative brings together the cities, schools, health and human service providers, businesses, families, and informal community supports in South Hennepin County to work in partnership. The collaborative is formed through a joint powers agreement signed by three cities and three school districts of Bloomington, Eden Prairie, and Richfield. FamiLink is a service of HSSC (see the following listing). Their website provides links to population analyses of Hennepin County and to “Quick Facts – Eden Prairie.”

Somali Community Services

2940 Pillsbury Ave.
Mpls., MN 55408
612-822-0405

Ali Abdifathah, Director

SCS is a social service agency located in Minneapolis but also serving Eden Prairie. An after school program meets in the E.P. Library, Wednesdays and Saturdays. It helps students, grades 1-8, with homework and summer school. The program targets single mothers and those children who are struggling the most. Youth Prevention Programs meet at the E.P. Community Center. It helps youth adjust to American culture and deals with issues such as dealing with teasing in school, acting out, and sensitivity to diversity.

FamiLink

952-884-0444

www.fami-link.org

This is a referral and resource center serving Eden Prairie, Bloomington and Richfield. *FamiLink's* resource center is a place people can call or visit to learn about and connect with community services and supports. Staff at the resource center explore resources ranging from formal, conventional services to more informal supports, such as mentors, youth activities and support groups. The staff also do the legwork necessary to discover the best resources for a family's or an individual situation.

Eden Prairie Schools

8100 School Road

Eden Prairie, MN 55344-2292

952-975-7114

Nanette Missaghi is the Human Resources and Diversity Coordinator for the Eden Prairie School District. Her staff has developed a PowerPoint tool for cultural sensitivity training for the employees of the school district.

Volunteer Connection

2575 West 88th Street

Bloomington, MN 55431-1925

952-681-6116

www.volunteerconnection.org

Amy Libman is Coordinator of Adult Programs and facilitates the Eden Prairie Immigrant Services Group. Volunteer Connection is one of the largest volunteer organizations serving learners in the South Hennepin County area.

Small Business Owner Mentorship and Training

Abdulla Hassan is the contact.

o. 612-366-0940, h.952-294-0337

Hassan himself was sponsored by LSS of MN and assisted by a Lutheran church in his resettlement. He also was a liaison for the Minnesota Council of Churches. The intent of this program is for a small group of business owners to share their expertise with Somali immigrants wanting to start up a small business. The program does not charge fees for participation, and is not remunerated in any way, but is conducted solely by volunteers.

Islamic Center of Minnesota

1401 Gardena Ave. NE

Fridley, MN

763-571-5604

icm_fridley@yahoo.com

The center provides no local social services to Muslims, but relies on individuals at local mosques to assist their communities.

Islamic Cultural Community Center

2534 Central Ave. NE

Mpls., MN

612-782-3883

The center provides no local social services to Muslims, but relies on individuals at local mosques to assist their communities.

Somserv, Inc.

P.O. Box 19200

Minneapolis, MN 55419-0200

612-822-2181

Rev. Yaqub Mohamed, Exec. Dir.

Rev. Mohamed is a Somalian and a converted Muslim. He came to the U.S. as a student at Princeton. Because he has not had the Somali refugee camp experience he sometimes has credibility issues with other Somalis. Somserv's intent is to provide services such as ESL, adult literacy, youth mentoring, family issues (divorce, pregnancy, etc.), women support services, business start-up assistance, etc. Somserv's Board of Directors is ecumenical, including ELCA (Rev. Roland Wells).

Taslina Khaled

Richfield, 612-866-2282

Ms. Khaled is recommended as a speaker on everyday life in Muslim household.

St. Andrew Lutheran Church

13600 Technology Dr.

Eden Prairie, MN 55344

952-829-0525

The church is not actively serving Somalis directly, but supports the local food shelf and other organizations that serve Somalis.

Eden Prairie United Methodist Church

15050 Scenic Heights Rd.

Eden Prairie, MN 55344

952-937-8781

The church provides no direct service to Somalis, supports other organizations serving Somalis.

Prairie Lutheran Church

11000 Blossom Rd.

Eden Prairie, MN 55346

952-829-0525

The congregation provides no direct services to Somalis or other groups. It's ministry emphasis is on making disciples, with focus on young local families.

American Red Cross

Minneapolis Area Chapter
1201 West River Parkway
Mpls. MN 55454-2020
612-871-7676

www.mplsredcross.org

Sheryl Clum, Social Worker

Red Cross Disaster Services responds to local disasters, usually home fires, providing food, clothing and temporary shelter. The service is only for people without homeowners insurance, which includes many immigrants. Red Cross International Family Search Service provides a messaging service between families in different countries, and a tracing service to locate families when complete contact lost, such as the experience of Somalis dislocated by war and going through refugee camps. Red Cross Health and Safety Department provides workplace training in CPR, First Aid, etc., offers HIV prevention training specific to Hispanic and African communities, and provides babysitting classes (11 yrs. and older) in host facilities.

LCTS (Local Collaborative Time Study)

is a school district assessment of non-teaching contact hours, used to gauge government funding levels. The Eden Prairie Community Advisory Council decides funding for local programs based on the data collected by LCTS. It also provides grants to local nonprofit service providers, mostly to support preventative youth-related programs.

City of Eden Prairie

8080 Mitchell Rd.
Eden Prairie, MN 55344
952-949-8300

The city provides grants to local nonprofit service providers, with funding from Hennepin County block grants.

Appendix 1

Immigrants in Eden Prairie

6th Sunday of Easter, May 25, 2003
Acts 10:44-48, John 15:9-17

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen
Immanuel Luth. Ch., Eden Prairie

May 11, 1850, Iver Hendrickson boarded the ship “Lynna” with his older sister.
Iver was 17 years old.

His father died when Iver was barely 14 years old.

He and Margarete left behind their mother and another sister,
never to see them or their home again.

After 5 months on the sea, a shipwreck, and travel on freight barge
they landed at Milwaukee, Wisconsin – just in time for winter.

Iver worked as a farm hand for five years.

During that time he helped build East Wiota Lutheran Church near Argyle, Wisconsin.
The church still stands.

In September, 1855, Iver went to northern Iowa,
and split rails until he saved some money to buy land.

In January the next year he purchased 48 acres in Allamakee County, Iowa,
borrowing money at 40% interest.

He later refinanced at 20%.

Iver and a neighbor, Jorgen Veierbraaten,
together bought a pair of oxen to break up the Iowa prairie for farming.

The work was difficult,
prairie grass was tough to plow,
the grass kept growing back in the fields,
fires often swept through the prairie.

But he persisted until he owned 1380 acres of prime Iowa farmland,
320 acres of Wisconsin farmland,
built a bridge across Deer Creek to haul his grain to market,
held the first Lutheran worship service in Deer Creek in his own home,
organized the first school in the area and held it in his home,
and was the first postmaster of Deer Creek, Iowa.

His ancestors went on to become
educators, doctors, farmers, lawyers, businessmen, and pastors.

I tell this story because we all are descendents of immigrants, or immigrants ourselves.

The United States of America is largely a nation of immigrants.

Leaving behind the unworkable politics of the past,
bringing new ideas, hope, willingness to risk, determination,
committing to strangers so as to build communities,
neighbors helping neighbors,

until this country has achieved the greatness we know today.

We are the product of *immigrants*, strangers in a foreign land.

I tell this story because it is fitting to remember this Memorial Day weekend,
those who sacrificed and strove to build a place for future generations.

We remember what it took to come this far.
We remember their losses and suffering.
We remember their lessons.

I tell this story, also, because it is about
leaving behind the familiar,
leaving behind traditions and assumptions and habits,
and committing to strangers to build community.

The drama unfolding in the passage from Acts is an incident of God's humor in the Bible.
Cornelius was a Roman soldier, an officer in Caesar's army,
who was generous and devout.

Mid-afternoon one day he has a vision;
an angel of the Lord appears to him and gives him a strange message.
Cornelius is to send men to Joppa and bring back someone called Peter.
It's a pretty weird thing to have happen, but who is he to take a chance with God?

The next day in Joppa, Peter is hungry and waiting for something to eat.
While waiting he prays,

but as you know sometimes happens when praying
his mind starts wandering and he daydreams.

Peter has a weird dream in which he sees a huge sheet come out of heaven
filled with all sorts of inedible creatures.

The Lord commands him to eat, saying that what the Lord creates is never unclean.
(It's not said what sort of surprise the chef cooked for lunch.)

Well, Cornelius' men arrive and take Peter over to Joppa.

Peter doesn't know what's up.

The men escorting him don't know why.
And when they arrive,

Cornelius *himself* does not know what's suppose to happen.

So the meeting is called to order and everyone is standing around
waiting for someone to do something!

This is where our reading from Acts begins.

Not knowing what else to do, Peter begins speaking.

He begins by remembering.

He begins by telling the story of Jesus.

He begins by remembering what has been done in the past.

And as he remembers, the Holy Spirit wisps up in him – and soon to all the others.

Then in culmination, the “Holy Spirit fell upon” the Gentiles,

the *Gentiles*, whom everyone considered outside of God's promises!

It is then that Peter lays aside his assumptions,

lays aside tradition and teachings and habits,
to welcome into baptism those God has made.

Cornelius and his family, outsiders, foreigners, Gentiles, are welcome in God's home.
Iver Hendrickson named his third son “Cornelius,”

I think for this Roman Gentile.
Cornelius, Iver, and all the other immigrants, foreigners, outsiders, Gentiles,
are welcome in God's house.

Last Sunday's Star Tribune had on the front page of the Metro section
an article titled "Poverty Loosens Its Urban Grip."¹⁹
The article states that "the Twin Cities showed one of the nation's biggest drops
in the concentration of poor residents."
"The number of Twin Cities census tracts with concentrated poverty...
fell from 33 to 15 during the '90s."
It happened in lots of other places in the nation,
but in the Twin Cities it happened to a greater degree.
A number of factor contributed to the elimination of pockets of poverty,
a healthy economy, growth of jobs, a variety of social services.
But one factor stood out in this article.
G. Thomas Kingsley, director of National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership
(of the Urban Institute), said, and I quote,
"It is generally true... that 'melting-pot metros'
– those with lots of *immigrants* as a percentage of their minority populations
– are eliminating poverty much more quickly than others."
Immigrants contributed to the reduction of poverty and the improvement of communities.

Eden Prairie has a growing population of immigrants.
Some might see it as a "problem," an unwelcome change to the community.
Whether or not we like it, the change is happening.
We can see this either as a "problem" to be feared,
or as an opportunity the Lord is opening before us.
These last few months I have been meeting with schools, police, social services
and churches that serve the people of Eden Prairie.
From the conversations I have heard, the major immigrant populations in Eden Prairie
are Russian, Southeast Asian and Somali.
I have also heard that the Russian immigrants have a good network of services
assisting their resettlement and assimilation,
as do also the Southeast Asians.
But for several reasons, the Somalis have few services,
that the need is greater for the Somalis.
As you might know, the Somalis are predominantly Muslim.
Most of the churches in Eden Prairie *do not* have intentional outreach to the Somalis,
I would guess because the Somalis are Muslim,
evangelism will be difficult,
and helping Muslims is currently politically unpopular.
Other churches are not so interested in providing for basic human needs
simply because it is just and right,
as they are interested in converting non-Christians
to their congregation membership.

¹⁹ David Peterson, "Poverty Loosens Its Urban Grip," *Star Tribune*, Sunday May 18, 2003, p. B1.

I have also checked local mosques to see how they are caring for the immigrant Muslims.
It would seem that Muslim mosques would be concerned
about helping Muslim brothers and sisters.

But apparently this is *not* part of their religious practice.

To date I have seen no mosque representative at any social service meetings
or participate in any kind of social service to the Somalis.

As I discussed this opportunity for Immanuel Lutheran Church
with the Social Ministry Committee and with other church people,
my thinking has gone through a transformation.

Initially I saw a need to assist the settlement of Somali immigrants

out of purely humane reasons:

people need a means of supporting their families, that means jobs,
new arrivals don't necessarily know how

to shop for food or start up utilities or register children for school,
perceptions of police and others in authority might be so frightening
that immigrants don't understand the protection they provide
and the help they offer,

procedures for handling behavioral problems of their children in school
might be unknown,

available services such as housing assistance might be a foreign concept.

Just providing basic help in navigating American society

was for me reason enough to help Somali immigrants;
the quality of life in Eden Prairie would be improved

for immigrant and resident alike.

Early on, religion was not a prominent factor.

As I saw it, out of respect for Muslims,

we would not promote Christianity as a condition of our social ministry.

In my thinking serving the human needs of the Somalis

could be disassociated from meeting any spiritual needs they might have.

But I have learned that the local mosques are *not* serving the needs of Somalis,
and that their practice of Islam is actually at times

oppressing and disserving the Somalis here.

My thinking has changed recently.

Not to make listening to the Gospel of Jesus Christ

a *condition* for receiving our assistance,

but taking the time as we serve the needs of immigrants

to make it clear we do so because our Lord teaches us to love all people,

our religion is one of caring service and sincere concern,

that our Lord desires something better for all of us.

Not to evangelize as some Christians would,

but to witness to the mercy of Christ in our chance encounters.

“Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people...?” asks Peter.

Can we dare *withhold* our faith and beliefs from our immigrant neighbors?

Last Sunday Pastor Paul pointed out that The First Letter of John
 hammered home the command to love one another.²⁰
 This Sunday Jesus is saying it again in the gospel reading.
 The passage uses the plural “you.”
 It doesn’t come across in English,
 but Jesus is saying “you all the church,” not “you each person.”
 The sense is that this is not an *individual* choice,
 but that each of us act on behalf of *the entire* congregation.
 The decision is not about whether any one of us feels helping immigrants
 is a *personal* calling,
 but whether this congregation *as a whole* will find a way to respond.
 “You did not choose me, but I chose you
 and I appointed you to bear fruit and that your fruit should abide,” says Jesus.²¹
 We don’t “decide” for Christ.
 Our Lord created us,
 our Lord redeemed us,
 our Lord continues to inspire and sustain us,
 our Lord has appointed us for particular tasks,
 and our Lord has given *this* church *this* task.
 I have come to a crossroad where I need to hear from you.
 I need to hear what you think, or what the Lord is saying to you,
 about this congregation’s ministry to Somali immigrants.
 I have some ideas on *how* to do it.
 I need to hear from you *whether* this church should do it.

On this Memorial Day weekend I will remember
 those who fought for and those who built up this nation.
 Tomorrow my Dad has asked me to go to the cemeteries with him
 to remember our people who have gone before us.
 I did not earn this country and I do not deserve this life,
 but by God’s grace here I am.
 It is now my duty to preserve and improve this earth
 and our civilization for the generations that follow.
 Our Lord has placed us here and now
 to do our part in our Lord’s kingdom
 with the people and resources God has provided.
 Here we are in Eden Prairie.
 Here are Somali immigrants in this community.
 Here is the Lord’s command to love one another.
 And here is the Lord’s word,
 “You did not choose me,
 I chose you and appointed you ... to go and bear fruit...”
 Amen.

²⁰ 1 John 4:7-21.

²¹ John 15:16.

Appendix 2

Somali Outreach Plan

Pastor Chris Hagen

June 16, 2003

Last Monday, June 9th, I invited the Social Ministry Committee, the Evangelism Committee, the Church Council, and anyone of the congregation interested in ministering to Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie. My intent was to hear from you about those concerns we need to be considering as we begin planning outreach to Somalis.

Four general areas were identified. These topics form the outline of a plan to begin ministering to Somali immigrants.

1. Somali History and Culture

It was felt that we do not know enough of the Somali's history and culture to know how best to approach them. We don't know their reasons for coming to Eden Prairie or their struggles. There are issues with adapting to life in America. What from their culture in Somalia is not working in America? What are the challenges of Somalis settling in Eden Prairie, and how can Immanuel Lutheran Church help? On the other hand, there is much to be valued in Somali culture, and much we can learn from them.

2. Current Services Assisting Somali Immigrants

Rather than duplicating efforts and competing for funding, it seems a better use of our resources and people to cooperate with existing services where we can. To that end we need to know what other agencies and churches are doing and how ILC might partner with them. We need to hear from the agencies and churches those areas of need that currently are *not* being met. Then ILC can begin forming our own particular outreach that draws on the strengths of all Eden Prairie, targeting those needs where we can do the greatest good.

3. The Purpose Behind Serving this Outreach Effort

A discussion must take place on just what ILC hopes to accomplish in ministering to Somali immigrants. Converting Muslims to Christianity is one point of view. Serving only the humanitarian needs of Somalis without any connection to our faith is another. Witnessing to our own beliefs as we work beside the Somalis is a third viewpoint. There are perhaps others. Discussing the purpose and expected outcomes of ministering to Somalis must take place to guide the tasks and direction of this ministry.

4. Specific Steps to Immigrant Ministry

The above three areas of concern give outline to the steps for ILC. I will begin scheduling for this fall discussions on the three areas. Where possible we will draw on the expertise of those who currently serve Somali immigrants. As a group we will work through the specifics of ILC's outreach. Then we will put in place a plan of action.

I suggest a couple of guidelines as we move forward: begin with simple and achievable actions, partner with other agencies and churches, and prepare well.

Thanks for your interest, commitment and prayers. May God be glorified.

Appendix 3

News Release

From September 25th through October 30th, Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 16515 Luther Way, Eden Prairie, will be hosting a series of information and discussion events on services to Somali immigrants in Eden Prairie. The series is every Thursday evening, 7:00-8:30 PM from September 25th through October 30th.

Sept. 25th, the Refugee Department of Lutheran Social Service will describe the experiences of immigrants coming to Eden Prairie. Addressed will be the recent history of Somalia, reasons for Somalis immigrating to Eden Prairie, the cultural adjustments they face settling here, the particular challenges they face assimilating into American culture, and what benefits Somali immigrants bring to Eden Prairie.

Oct. 2nd, local social service agencies will tell of what assistance is currently available to immigrants in Eden Prairie and what needs are going unmet.

Oct. 9th, Professor Mark Swanson of Luther Seminary will provide an introduction to Islam, along with how to bear witness to Muslims through mutual engagement that respects each others' faiths.

Oct. 16th, Pastor Cherian Puthiyottil of AGORA Ministries will present cultural and other considerations for serving Somalis. Cross-culture etiquette will be among the issues discussed.

On Oct. 23rd and 30th will be group discussions for discerning what Immanuel Lutheran Church's particular mission to the Somalis might be. The discussions will include how best to partner with other churches and agencies currently serving Somali immigrants.

The public is invited to the events. There is no charge for attendance.

For more information contact The Rev. Chris Hagen, 952-937-8123.

Appendix 4

From Comfort to Blessing

P11-03, August 24, 2003

Josh.24:1-2a,14-18, Jn.6:56-69

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen

Immanuel L.Ch., Eden Prairie

In the grand old stories of the Bible there is a common theme that constantly annoys me. Since Sunday school I have been told that the scripture stories are “good news.”

We’ve been led to believe God’s Word is a joy to hear.

But in story after story,

the great compassionate Lord who loves his people like a shepherd,
takes us lambs out of the comfort of our fold,

out of familiar surroundings and old friends,
out of sure confidence in what is right and true,
out of contentment with the way things are,

and leads us into the unknown.

Makes me kind of wonder just how much I want to follow such a God.

The Old Testament reading takes place in Joshua’s last days.

You remember from your own Sunday school days

how the Lord picked Moses to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt,
through the parting of the Red Sea,
through the wanderings in the wilderness,
up to the banks of the Jordan River.

Moses himself could not cross into the Promised Land

because of his temper flare-up in the desert.

So Joshua took over and took the people across the river.

One of the juiciest stories early in The Book of Joshua

is that of Joshua’s spies spending the night at the harlot Rahab’s place.

This “fallen woman” was instrumental in Israel’s salvation.

It takes a bit of moral stretching to appreciate the subtleties of the story.²²

And you will remember the time when “Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho.”²³

Joshua was “seeing things.”

He claimed that an angel told him to march around Jericho for six days,
making a racket with trumpets and ram’s horns.

On the seventh day they all should march around Jericho seven times,
and on the long blast from the ram’s horn

all the people should shout as loud as they could.

Then the walls will come tumbling down, as easy as that!

Come on!

Is this any way to go against a fortified city?

Is this any way to win a war against overwhelming force?

²² Joshua 2:1-24, 6:22-25

²³ Joshua 5:13-6:21

Over and over in Joshua and all the other scripture stories
the Lord tells the people to do uncomfortable things, unreasonable things,
ridiculous things.

Yet when the people obey, the Lord blesses them in wondrous ways.
In the first reading this morning Joshua says some last words to the people he led.
Together they had accomplished amazing things.
Together they had prevailed against impossible odds.

Joshua calls together all the elders and leaders of Israel for some final words.
Joshua begins by reminding them of all that God has done for them in history.
In our reading we skipped the long litany of God's deliverance.
Joshua reminded them of Abraham
leaving the comfort and protection of home and family in Ur,
to go to some unknown land,
to live as an immigrant among who-knows-what kind of people,
to do only-God-knows-what.

Joshua reminded them of their ancestors
who, only a generation before, left the hard but familiar life in Egypt,
where life was predictable,
where they at least got a meager meal a day,
where they had a place to stay at night.

Joshua reminded them of their courage in standing up to the enemies in the new land,
how city after city this rag-tag band of wanderers, out-numbered and out-gunned,
defeated their enemies and conquered the land.

Joshua reminded them that it was not by their own might and righteous cause
that won them this place.

Joshua reminded them that in every instance, in every challenge, along every mile,
it was The Lord who delivered them.

In all these events the Lord called people out of familiar circumstances
to enter places infinitely better.

Had not Abraham left Haran, there would be no Promised Land.
Had not the enslaved Hebrews left Egypt, there would be no Jewish nation.
Had not the spies of Joshua stayed the night with a prostitute,
there would have been no Israel.

Had not the people taken on bigger, stronger armies because of God's command,
these words read today would not have been written.

This is not some distant god looking down from above of whom Joshua speaks.
This is the Lord, Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and
Moses,
who acts in history,
who moves through people,
who calls us out of comfort into a better day,
who sends us into the unknown, promising to be with us all the way.

The Lord calls us out of comfort and familiar and easy,
to blessings beyond our imagining.

And the people answered,

“Who are we to forsake the Lord to serve other gods...
we also will serve the Lord, for this one is our God.”

Today’s Gospel reading is another
in the many we’ve had over the last weeks on the “bread of life” theme.
Like Israel in the wilderness,
I’m getting kind of sick of feasting on plain old bread week after week.
This, though, is the last Sunday in this series on bread.
The chapter begins with thousands flocking to see Jesus.
They were given a free lunch on the hillside, and followed Jesus for more.
Then Jesus had to open his mouth and spoil the fun.
He begins teaching about himself being bread from heaven to give and sustain life.
First the religious leaders mumble complaints among themselves.
Jesus speaks to them.
Then, in today’s reading, his own disciples mumble complaints.
And some drop away.

Jesus is doing something radically different from what people were expecting.
Jesus was taking them to a place different from where other leaders had gone before.
Jesus was making claims about himself
that were not tolerable in the way religion and politics were done.
Under the old religious system,
the Temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship,
and it was there that people brought sacrifices so as to meet God.
But Jesus clears out the Temple, symbolically tearing down the old system.
With Jesus begins a new age when we see God face-to-face in the person of Jesus.
No longer is Jerusalem and the Temple the seat of God,
but now it is in a human, Jesus, where we come into the presence of God.
The temple priests don’t take kindly to that change.

Also in the time of Jesus on earth,
the people of Israel were having it pretty hard
holding together their nation under Roman rule,
preserving their religion among all the pagan gods infiltrating the country,
hanging on to any kind of influence
with so many foreign ideas and practices being bandied about.
So the Pharisees enforced the religious laws
as a way of preserving the faith under siege by outside elements.
When things are uncertain,
observing traditions and falling back on established laws
keeps society’s bearings and gives direction amidst confusion.
But Jesus does something different.
He doesn’t follow suit enforcing the law.
He lets his followers pick grain on the Sabbath.
He talks with women alone.
He doesn’t bother to wash his hands before meals.

This next month we will begin a discernment process
to discover just what the Lord has in mind.
I don't have the answer for this church.
Pastor Paul has a pretty good idea of the Lord's direction.
But neither of us knows precisely what needs to be done.
The Lord will reveal his will for this church
through a series of discussions involving you all.
The series begins on Thursday, September 25th,
and continues every Thursday of October,
meeting at 7:00 o'clock here in this church.
More explanation is given in the *Luther's Way* newsletter
coming out at the end of this month.
You are welcome to call me as well for further information.
Please, all of you have a part to contribute
in discerning God's will on the matter of Somali immigrant ministry.

However, starting out the whole mission of ministering across cultures
is the Tent Meeting in two weeks.
Saturday evening, September 6th at 5:00 o'clock, two weeks from now,
we will worship out on the lawn under the tent.
This year we are privileged to hear speak The Reverend Cherian Puthiyottil,
a pastor from southern Asia who has extensive experience and insight
on people moving out of the comfort of familiar culture
to welcome and minister people who are different.
Pastor Cherian is bringing a choir from Mt. Horeb Church in Minneapolis.
Mt. Horeb Church has become a part of AGORA Ministries,
which Pastor Cherian directs.
Mt. Horeb is a tiny church that meets in a small storefront.
They are few people, but their faith is great.
Pastor Cherian is bringing the church's small choir,
but also as much as half the congregation
to worship with us at the Saturday Tent Meeting.
It is an honor for this congregation to host Pastor Cherian and Mt. Horeb Church.
That small church is passionate about their life in Jesus.
They worship two, three hours on Sunday.
They hold prayer services three times a week.
And the Lord is leading them out of their familiar surroundings to be with us.
The congregation is mostly Latino.
They will sing in Spanish.
They have a different worship style than what we are used to.
The Lord is leading them out of familiar worship to praise God with us.
They will be an incredible blessing to this church, and we to them,
as we worship together Saturday night, the 6th.

There are a few things of which I would like to remind you.
They are our guests that evening.

They are coming to us.
We don't know them personally, but we have invited them.
Please, go out of your way to personally shake their hands and welcome them.
Mt. Horeb Church is a blessing to Immanuel.
They are an inspiration.
They are God's presence for us.
In their songs and prayers and spontaneity of spirit,
search for what God is doing among us.

The Lord leads us out of our comfort zones
into ventures we might rather forego.
But as with Abraham and his descendants,
as with the Israelites under Joshua,
as with Jesus,
the momentary discomforts,
the temporary uncertainties,
pale to the overwhelming blessings God has planned for us.
The Lord calls us out of comfort and familiar and easy,
to blessings beyond our imagining.
Amen.

Appendix 5

Newsletter Article for September 2003

O sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name! Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous work among all the peoples! Psalm 96:1-3

In past generations churches sent missionaries to far lands in obedience to Christ to “make disciples of all nations.” But in these last years the Lord has been bringing the mission field to us. Immigrants from all over the world are moving into our communities, providing convenient opportunities for proclaiming Christ to the nations.

This month, Immanuel Lutheran Church begins its new theme of *Tell the World*. The world has come to Eden Prairie with the arrival of various immigrant groups. A host of agencies assist the settling of immigrants, but those still most underserved are the Somalis.

In response to the Lord and in line with our new theme, there is scheduled a process of discerning what will be Immanuel Lutheran Church’s outreach to Somali immigrants.

From September 25th through October 30th, Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30 PM, the congregation is invited to engage in discussions on how this church might witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather than the crusading method of past centuries, we will seek how best to witness through mutual dialogue and personal interaction with Somali immigrants.

On Sept. 25, the Refugee Department of Lutheran Social Service will describe the experiences of immigrants coming to Eden Prairie.

Oct. 2nd, local social service agencies will tell of what assistance is currently available to immigrants in Eden Prairie and what needs are going unmet. This will give clues to what Immanuel Lutheran Church’s ministry might be.

Oct. 9th, Professor Mark Swanson of Luther Seminary will provide an introduction to Islam, along with how to bear witness to Muslims through mutual engagement.

Oct. 16th, Pastor Cherian Puthiyottil of AGORA Ministries will present some cultural and other considerations for outreach to Somalis.

On Oct. 23rd and 30th there will be group discussions for discerning specifically Immanuel Lutheran Church’s ministry plan for mission to the Somalis.

Tell the World cross-cultural mission to immigrants in suburban America is a recent phenomena. There is little history or precedence to this form of evangelism. Immanuel Lutheran Church is among the few churches since the first century to engage in cross-cultural and cross-religion missionary activity within their own communities. This is an exciting endeavor that will be an example for other churches.

Through this process of discovery and discernment, we trust the Holy Spirit to reveal Immanuel Lutheran Church’s purpose in God’s plan of witnessing to the world.

May Christ be praised!

Appendix 6

Tent Meeting Worship Sat., Sept. 6, 2003

Words of Preparation

By the oaks of Mamre, Abraham and Sarah entertained angels unawares. It was only after showing hospitality and entering in conversation that they knew the presence of God among them (Genesis 18:1-15). On the road to Emmaus two travelers talked with a stranger. They invited him to their home. It was in the eating of a meal together that they then knew their guest was Jesus (Luke 24:13-35). God appears among us in the hospitality we show guests. We are delighted this evening for our guests, for we look for God to come among us in the hospitality we share. We are privileged you are here. We are honored you have joined us in worship. You are no longer strangers, but friends. May the Lord be praised!

Gathering

“O, How I Love Jesus”
“I Saw the Light”
“Down to the River to Pray”
Prayer of Preparation

Welcome

(special welcome to Rev. Cherian Puthiyottil and Mt. Horeb Church)

Call to Worship

Invocation
“Blessed Assurance”
Anthem by Mt. Horeb choir

The Word

Romans 10:5-17 (Spanish and English)
Psalm 96:1-4 (responsively by Spanish and English)
Anthem by Mt. Horeb choir
Matthew 18:1-7 (Ethiopian and English)
Sermon “Greatest in Heaven” The Rev. Cherian Puthiyottil

Response

“I Love to Tell the Story”
Offering
Anthem by Mt. Horeb choir
Prayers
The Lord’s Prayer

Sending

Benediction
P: Go in peace. Tell the world.
C: Thanks be to God.
“Will the Circle Be Unbroken” “I’ll Fly Away” “Jesus Loves Me”

* Special Offering received will be donated to AGORA Ministries.

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