



Marketing & Branding
Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran
Church & School
Principal: Andy Benscoter

The philosophy of Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran Church is based upon discovering the love of God, developing as children in Christ's love, and declaring the promise of eternal salvation through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Shepherd of the Desert Church has always valued personal growth and the sharing of Christ's love through a relationship-based approach.

Thus in 1983, Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran Church established its school to meet the needs of children age three and four. Sessions for children age two were added in 1989 and in 1994 the school expanded to include kindergarten. A gradual expansion into the elementary grades was begun in 1999 with the addition of grades one through three. In June 2001, the members of the congregation approved continued expansion of the school through grade eight. In June 2006, Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran School held its first graduation ceremony.

Until 2006, Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran School had been focused upon growing in enrollment with the intention of sharing Christ with the community of Scottsdale. However, during the summer of 2006, the principal of Shepherd of the Desert accepted a call to serve as an educational adviser to other Christian schools within the United States. The combination of a changing community and a lack of administrative leadership created a sudden drop in enrollment during 2007 and 2008. A school which at one time had over 330 children coming on campus was now seeing only 250 children coming through the classroom doors.

In May of 2008, I accepted a call to serve as Principal of Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran School. A large change in Church and School leadership had opened the door for creative change and an opportunity to use strategic planning as a format to develop a common focus on areas needing to be addressed allowing for opportunities to expand the ministry.

The leadership of Church and School came together through twelve three-hour sessions to create a living strategic plan, which contains both long- and short-term initiatives. These initiatives were developed in support of our Mission of "Leading People to Follow Jesus." The Church & School plans were developed with a joint team of 18 members to ensure strong support and universal agreement in steps to accomplish these initiatives.

Project Focus & Progression:

Leverage output from the strategic planning process to clearly define the Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran School brand and offering and develop a comprehensive marketing plan and supporting materials to generate awareness and drive increased enrollment. (Strategic Planning 6/7/2009)

I assembled a marketing team for both Church & School along with a periodic marketing coordination meeting to oversee both teams and with these objectives in mind:

1. Ensure that there is coordination and consistencies between Church & School
2. Eliminate duplicate efforts
3. Develop a consistent brand identity in look, feel, and messaging
4. Coordinate marketing efforts where feasible to realize cost efficiencies
5. Coordinate our outreach and in reach "touches" of key constituents.

As a committee we quickly realized the large amount of work which would be required for the completion of the above tasks. Thus, a plan was developed to allow for a period of two or three years to complete the key elements of the strategic initiative. The tasks of year one would create a foundation for communicating the quality ministry opportunities being offered at Shepherd of the Desert Church and School. The committee would focus upon clearly defining the Shepherd of the Desert brand & offering, updated the logo design for both Church and School, creation of a publication standard and completion of a new Church website with a similar School website beginning shortly.



In August of 2009, the marketing committee gathered to review bids from graphic designers. A graphic designer would be contracted to design multiple logos which communicate a common style for the three core ministries (Church, MegaLife, and School) of Shepherd of the Desert. The graphic designer would also develop standard guidelines for all ministry publications. Set type fonts, logos, and colors would assist in the creation of a standard brand used to communicate information and ministry opportunities.



The School began the transition of the new logo and colors during the summer of 2010. New letter head, business cards, banners, posters, a new website (which is in the process of being created), student uniforms, and campus signage have all be redesigned based upon the new logo and color palate.



The marketing committee has moved through two rough drafts of the publication standards. As a committee we hope to finalize this document in the upcoming month. During the fall of 2010, these standards will be used to update all internal and external ministry publications for the Shepherd of the Desert campus.

As the marketing committee moves forward into the second year of strategic Initiative two, our focus has begun to center upon the external communication being provided to the Scottsdale community.



The importance of hiring a part-time Marketing/Admissions Coordinator became evident based upon the time intensity and variety of opportunities to communicate to our community about the ministries occurring at Shepherd of the Desert. This position will focus upon increasing interest and enrollment in our school specifically through public relations and personal relationships developed with prospective families.

Throughout this process Shepherd of the Desert Congregation has seen an average increase increase in worship of 150 per Sunday. The school has also seen a significant increase in enrollment for the 2010/11 school year. The school completed the 2009 school year with 293 students (preschool to 8th grade) enrolled. We currently have 365 students (preschool to 8th grade) enrolled for the 2010 school year.

With such a significant increase in worship and school enrollment the congregation has approved the purchase of a second campus located three blocks from our main facilities. This second campus will be redesigned to allow for a contemporary worship site for MegaLife and a new Preschool building which will also allow our Preschool to double in enrollment from the current 163 students.

The marketing committee will be a key part of the integration of the new Preschool Campus. Discussions have begun to evaluate the opportunities to develop a Preschool program designed to meet the specific needs of the seventy five doctor offices located with a three block radius of the building. A combination of communication vehicles (mailings, personal office visits and campus events) will be used to introduce MegaLife and the Preschool to the community.

Conclusion

"Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." Matthew 9:37-38

In Matthew 9, we learn of the large opportunity that lays before our ministries. The marketing committee has embraced this opportunity and seen the variety of blessings from working within the Harvest. Several key themes assisted the marketing team through the past 18 months as we strived to define and develop the marketing and branding of Shepherd of the Desert.

- A collection of key congregation and school leaders worked together to develop a common purpose, approach and target for ministry growth
- Time lines and roll-out plans are an essential part of the planning process.
- Brand updating / designing requires a strong buy-in from the staff and congregation

The results of this process have been seen directly, with a strong growth in enrollment and the congregation's support of the purchase of a second campus for the Preschool Program's expansion. Through this process the marketing committee gained a stronger understanding of the large amount of daily publications which occurs for both Church and School. The marketing committee has also gained a much greater understanding of the importance of support from all staff members.

I personally, have been fortunate to have flexible team members throughout this process. While additional steps are required for completion of this strategic plan, I have been pleasantly impressed with the impact of the new branding and marketing of Shepherd of the Desert Church and School. These are exciting days for the ministry of Shepherd of the Desert.