My dear friend in Christ,

You have probably seen the bulletin inserts about a new program we are implementing at St. Peters called *The Peter Plan.* I want to provide a brief summary of how the plan works, and what its three goals are.

**How *The Peter Plan* works**

*The Peter Plan* is simply an expansion of what many WELS congregations currently do – having communicant members register for the Lord’s Supper. In those churches, communicant members often fill out a communion registration card and put it in the offering plate. It gives the congregation a record of who has received the Lord’s Supper. This has been common practice in Lutheran churches for over a century.

*The Peter Plan* has two minor differences from that historic practice. First, members register for all services, whether the Lord’s Supper is observed or not. Secondly, all members register, not just communicant members. (Registration can be done by one person in the family filling out the names of all the family.) This is done on a worship register pad. There is one per pew. At the beginning of the offering, the register pad is handed down each isle. Families or individuals simply record their presence.

So, again, *The Peter Plan* really isn’t anything new. It is an improvement on what churches have done for generations. Instead of only recording who receives the Lord’s Supper, we will have record of everyone who came in contact with both Word and sacrament.

**The three goals of *The Peter Plan***

The first goal of *The Peter Plan* is to make sure that people are fed with God’s Word regularly, even if the circumstances of their life prevent them from being able to attend worship. St. Peter gives instructions to “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care”(1 Peter 5:2). Shepherds find ways to feed the sheep under any circumstances.

With *The Peter Plan*, we will have an accurate record of someone who has missed worship for a month straight. People can miss church for legitimate reasons. These individuals will not always contact the church to let us know they are going to be absent. They don’t want to be a burden. These are the people we want to reach, to assure them it is no burden to bring them a devotion and the Lord’s Supper. Maybe their work schedule has prevented them from attending worship. Maybe they’ve been recovering from a knee surgery. We want to continue to serve them with the means of grace. But to do that, we need to have an accurate record of who was able to make it to worship, and who wasn’t.

The second goal of *The Peter Plan* is illustrated by an event in Peter’s life. Peter drifted away from his Savior, even denying him three times. After, he wondered if Jesus would want to have anything to do with him again. In John chapter 21, Jesus pulls Peter aside, assures Peter that he’s forgiven, and tells Peter he still wants him to serve in the Church. Peter had forsaken Jesus. Jesus could have gotten very angry. But Jesus restored Peter lovingly and gently.

Sometimes, when people drift away from church, it’s *not* for legitimate reasons. They lose interest in hearing God’s Word. Or they have an issue with someone at church and don’t want to deal with them. So they stop coming to church. This isn’t healthy. “Faith comes from hearing the message,” Scripture says (Romans 10:17). *The Peter Plan* also lets us follow up on members who have been absent from worship for longer periods of time. We want to gently encourage them to return to faithful use of Word and sacrament. And if they refuse, the loving thing to do is let them know they are sinning, and that God is calling them to repent. To *not* warn people that way would be unloving.

*The Peter Plan* lets us do this consistently. There is no guess work. E.g. *“Has Jim missed for eight weeks or eighteen weeks?”* Because we keep record, we know how long “Jim” has been gone. And we can attempt to restore him gently, just like Jesus did for Peter.

The third goal of *The Peter Plan* has nothing to do with members, and everything to do with worship visitors. When we have worship visitors, we want to do a better job of collecting their contact information. Pew worship registers has been shown to be *much* more effective at collecting that information than having a guest register in the entry foyer. With visitor contact information in hand, it allows me to follow up on those visitors, even going to their home to tell them more about our congregation, and to share with them a more personalized Gospel message.

**Open forum about *The Peter Plan***

Because this is a new ministry and fairly big undertaking, we will be having an open forum on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ where member can ask any questions they want about *The Peter Plan*.

However, the bottom line is, this pleases our Savior greatly. For all the goals of The Peter Plan – 1) feeding our members who are absent for legitimate reasons, 2) trying to gently restore straying members, and 3) better collecting contact information of guests so we might continue to share the Gospel with them – are things he has said in his Word are functions of *his* Church. They fulfill *his* mission.

To him be the glory!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor