

## **Our LEAD Journey**

*By Pastor Carrie Lewis La Plante*

When the opportunity to participate in the LEAD process arose last fall, it seemed to be a gift dropped into our congregation. I had just recently begun my call as Senior Pastor, and the people of Faith Lutheran were looking for some sort of strategic planning or visioning for the future. There was excitement about the possibilities of what church could be.

As we began to learn more about the LEAD process and the fact that it was less about strategic planning and more about listening for where the passion of the congregation could meet the needs of the community, many of us got excited while others became apprehensive. This concept was new and different and quite frankly, a little bit scary. We were really good at technical change to fix problems, but we were less adept at adaptive change and determining why God might have put us in this place at this time.

However, as the LEAD Team began to do the work of listening and imagining where this process might lead the congregation, an opportunity to test the waters arose, I would like to believe by the guiding of the Holy Spirit. One day, shortly after school finished for the summer, one of the LEAD Team members, Beth Ann, and I were having a conversation in the office when another leader in the congregation, Amy, came in. Having heard the day before about the great need for meals for children in our school district and concern that those needs were not being met during the summer, she wanted to start a sack lunch program in the North Scott area similar to one that her parents were doing at their church in Illinois. As it turned out, Beth Ann was having similar thoughts. To make a long story short, these two leaders in our congregation made some quick plans, invited some others from both within and beyond our congregation to join them, and within a week the North Scott Feed Our Children Ministry was born.

Over the summer, we served about 1,800 sack lunches to children in the North Scott area in three locations with more than 100 volunteers serving and providing the food and other items we needed – this is more than we ever expected. We are in the process of applying for grants to expand the ministry to more of the North Scott Communities next summer, and it has spurred other ministry teams in our congregation to seek out ways to reach these same children during the school year to continue to build the relationships we created and be sure that they have the food that they need year-round.

While this ministry was not specifically born out of the LEAD process, Beth Ann and I have often discussed the reality that, had we not been in the LEAD process and actively thinking about reaching our neighbors in tangible ways, we might not have been so quick to act on a very real need that we saw and for which we, as a congregation, have passion. We pray that as we continue with the LEAD process, more of these opportunities will present themselves, and we will be even more ready to act to meet those needs to actively show God's love right where we are.

