

**Lutheran Elementary School Revitalization:  
A Case Study of Sienna Lutheran Academy**

Adrienne Bengel

Martin Luther College

**Signature Page**

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This field project paper has been examined and approved.

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Dr. Robert Klindworth, Chair

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Dr. John Meyer, Committee Member

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Dr. Cynthia Whaley, Committee Member

Approved:

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Dr. John Meyer, Director of Graduate Studies

### **Abstract**

This field project was a case study of Sienna Lutheran Academy in Missouri City, Texas. The purpose of this case study was to create a model of school revitalization. This school was faced with the possibility of closure due to declining enrollment, changes in mission by the church, and changing demographics in the surrounding community. This case study focused on the importance of five key areas to consider for school revitalization: mission of church, mission of school, location, process, and budget. The goal of this case study was to better understand the dynamics influencing the school revitalization of Sienna Lutheran Academy and to suggest a model that may be considered by other schools. The people involved in this case study were the principal, pastor, church chairman, Board of Education chairman, and church members. Each was interviewed or surveyed with a specific set of research questions to gather information and data to help determine if the goal of this case study was reached. The results of this case study helped to create a model of what was successful for this school before, during, and after the school revitalization process. The findings are specific to Sienna Lutheran Academy and are not intended to be generalized. However, this field project may serve as a resource for other Lutheran Elementary Schools faced with a similar situation.

## Table of Contents

<b>Title Page</b>	.....	<b>1</b>
<b>Signature Page</b>	.....	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	.....	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	.....	<b>4</b>
<b>I. Introduction</b>	.....	<b>7</b>
A. Purpose of the project	.....	7
B. Importance of the project	.....	7
C. Goal of the project	.....	8
<b>II. Literature Review</b>	.....	<b>9</b>
A. Mission	.....	9
B. Enrollment	.....	10
C. Budget	.....	11
<b>III. Field Study</b>	.....	<b>12</b>
A. Research Design	.....	12
B. Subjects / Participants	.....	13
C. Site Selection	.....	13
D. Data Analysis	.....	15
E. Limitations of the design	.....	34
<b>IV. Reflective Essay</b>	.....	<b>35</b>
A. Introduction	.....	35
B. Conclusions	.....	35
C. Recommendations	.....	41

<b>V. List of Tables .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Table 3.1 2011-2012 Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School Budget...	21
Table 3.2 2011-2012 Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School Income...	21
Table 3.3 2012-2013 Christ the Lord Lutheran Church Budget .....	22
Table 3.4 2012-2013 Christ the Lord Lutheran Church Income .....	23
Table 3.5 2012-2013 Sienna Lutheran Academy Budget .....	24
Table 3.6 2012-2013 Sienna Lutheran Academy Income .....	24
Table 3.7 Church Member Survey Question 1 .....	27
Table 3.8 Church Member Survey Question 2 .....	28
Table 3.9 Church Member Survey Question 3 .....	29
Table 3.10 Church Member Survey Question 4 .....	29
Table 3.11 Church Member Survey Question 5 .....	30
Table 3.12 Church Member Survey Question 6 .....	31
Table 3.13 Church Member Survey Question 7 .....	32
Table 3.14 Church Member Survey Question 8 .....	33
Table 3.15 Church Member Survey Question 9 .....	34
<b>VI. Appendices .....</b>	<b>43</b>
A. Appendix A: Interview Questions .....	43
B. Appendix B: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church Member Survey .....	44
C. Appendix C: Faith-Family-Future Informational Packet .....	46
D. Appendix D: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School Budget 2011- 2012 .....	47
E. Appendix E: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and Sienna Lutheran Academy Budget 2012-2013 .....	50

F. Appendix F: Sienna Lutheran Academy School Revitalization Model 54

**VII. References ..... 56**

## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Project**

Private schools are faced with many challenges as they work to educate their students. Many private schools have been faced with the decision of whether or not to close their doors based on any number of challenging factors. Schools within the synod are in decline (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2013). What can we do to ensure the vitality of the Lutheran Elementary School? This field project is a case study of school revitalization at Sienna Lutheran Academy. The purpose of this field project is to study the school revitalization process of Sienna Lutheran Academy in Missouri City, Texas. The budget from the school's last academic year at its previous location and first academic year at its new location, the steps of the revitalization process from beginning to end, and the effects from the school's first academic year in its new location such as enrollment and level of satisfaction from the stakeholders are all valuable indications of whether or not the school revitalization was successful.

### **Importance of the Project**

This case study is important not only to the school which it studies, but may provide insights for other Lutheran Elementary Schools to consider. Declining enrollment, changing community demographics, and budget shortages are challenges many of the Lutheran Elementary Schools face on an annual basis (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2013). Sienna Lutheran Academy used a new approach for its school revitalization process. It closed the previous location of the school and reopened a new school and established a second congregation at a new location. The Commission on Lutheran Schools indicated this type of revitalization effort had never been done before. This field

project may be a first step in exploring models for other Lutheran Elementary Schools to follow in the years to come.

### **Goal of the Project**

The goal of this field project is to better understand the dynamics influencing the school revitalization of Sienna Lutheran Academy and to suggest a model that may be considered by other schools. It can shed light on how to simultaneously keep one church operating, while opening a new school and a new mission congregation. One passage which applies to this case study and supports the goal of this field project is from Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (New International Version, 1984).”



## **Literature Review**

### **Mission**

Revitalization by definition is restoring vitality or giving new life to a person, place, thing, or idea (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2013). School revitalization is the process of restoring vitality or giving new life to a school in need of a transformation. It implies reinvigorating, reenergizing, and in effect reinventing the whole school as a dynamic learning community, within which both adults and children can thrive in genuine inquiry and the excitement of discovering and creating new knowledge together (Beatty, 2007). For a whole school to experience revitalization, the individuals that make up the whole need to redefine their purposes and processes together (Beatty, 2007). The topic of school revitalization is relatively limited in its nature and research. Many schools close their doors and simply give up rather than seek out new ideas and innovative ways to remain open. Public schools have the assistance and regulations of the government to rely upon and operate under. On the other hand, private schools, in this case, Lutheran Elementary Schools have the support of the churches associated with them, the synod, and the families who attend them. Lutheran Elementary Schools have limited resources which can make school revitalization challenging. However, one source recognizes that school renewal will require a different discourse than the current conversations about school improvement and school effectiveness (Beatty, 2007). Despite the challenges that accompanied this school revitalization process, a change was necessary. Jesus did not establish any prescribed way to evangelize, educate and nurture the faith of people (Patterson, 2011). By adopting this innovative way of thinking, schools can educate and nurture the faith of those within its school in various ways.

**Enrollment**

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod school system is in decline. It has 1,289 congregations of which 328 operate a Lutheran Elementary School (Patterson, 2011). Total enrollment in the school system at the Lutheran Elementary Schools is 24,300 (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2013). It is the fourth largest private educational system in the United States (Patterson, 2011). However, over the last decade there has been a decline of about 16% in the enrollment of Lutheran Elementary Schools (Patterson, 2011). To offer an adequate comparison, statistics of the public sector must first be examined.

Public school enrollment has increased for elementary aged school children by 5% over the last decade (Aud, 2013). Public school enrollment of grades PreK-8 is expected to increase by 9% from 2011-2021 (Aud, 2013). Enrollment in public schools in Texas, specifically, is expected to increase 20% over the next decade (Aud, 2013). These statistics mean Lutheran Elementary Schools face the challenge of increasing their enrollment as much or more than the public sector in order to reach as many people with the Word of God as possible.

The National Center for Educational Statistics provides clarifying statistics. Sixty-eight percent of private schools have a religious orientation (Broughman, 2011). The average school size of a private school in 2010 was 141 students (Broughman, 2011). The average pupil/teacher ratio of a private school in 2010 was 10.7 (Broughman, 2011). Ten percent of all elementary school students attend private schools (Aud, 2013). Catholic schools maintain the largest share of total private school enrollment and have seen a

decrease in enrollment in the past ten years from 45% to 39% (Aud, 2013). However, parochial schools associated with other religions have increased by 35% during this same time (Aud, 2013). These statistics provide insight to the fact that other private and parochial schools are increasing enrollment, and they present Lutheran Elementary Schools with information for consideration.

### **Budget**

The increase in enrollment for public school elementary students also meant an increase in funding for public elementary schools as well. From 2001-2011 public schools increased their revenues by 20% (Aud, 2013). Public school expenditures per student increased by 20% during this same time frame as well (Aud, 2013). The increase in expenditure per student for instruction (19%) was greater than that for administration (15%) but smaller than that for student services (35%) (Aud, 2013).

Government funding of public schools is not the challenge, but rather adequate funding presents challenges for private schools. Private schools do not have access to the financial resources their public school counterparts do. Private schools must find other avenues of income and financial stability to continue their mission of educating students and operating their schools. If church and school leadership cannot maintain the school's funding, it will cease to exist (Patterson, 2011). This was in part, a concern facing the members of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and families at Christ the Lord Lutheran School. They chose to seek input from various sources and secure funding for a new school and church outreach program to help them in this endeavor.

## **Field Study**

### **Research Design**

This field project is designed as a case study using descriptive research to answer this question. The goal of this field project is to better understand the dynamics influencing the school revitalization of Sienna Lutheran Academy and to suggest a model that may be considered by other schools. Several key areas of research and data have been included which have a direct impact on the decisions made during the school revitalization process. These key areas include the mission of the school, site selection, enrollment, and budget. Open-ended interview questions were used for the individuals in leadership roles to gain qualitative and descriptive data. A survey was administered to members of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church using a scale of one through five to rate their overall satisfaction with the process and effects of the school revitalization in order to gain qualitative data for this project. Informational Faith-Family-Future packets used prior to and during the school revitalization process aided in reviewing which type of marketing materials were used as outreach tools for this process. The researcher also created graphs itemizing areas of the budget and income for Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, Christ the Lord Lutheran School, and Sienna Lutheran Academy during the years of 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Graphs were also created indicating the results of the church member surveys.

A review of the readiness study conducted by the third-party company of Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry assisted in analyzing the demographics influencing the decision to start the school revitalization process. Demographics of the area were analyzed in order to determine if the location of the second campus of Christ the Lord Lutheran

Church and Sienna Lutheran Academy indeed indicated a need for a church and private school and justified the decision to complete the school revitalization.

The combination of the information and data collected from the surveys, interviews, and readiness study provided a better understanding of what dynamics influenced the school revitalization process in this case study and will help influence the model created for other schools to consider when contemplating school revitalization.

### **Subjects / Participants**

The participants in this field project are the pastors of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, the principal of Christ the Lord Lutheran School and Sienna Lutheran Academy, the Board of Education Chairman, the Chairman of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, and the Chairman of the Ministry Team at Christ the Lord Lutheran Church. Those listed above served in key leadership roles prior to, during, and after the school revitalization process. They were the people making the decisions significantly influencing the overall school revitalization process and gave valuable input and insight for the interview questions. The co-founder of Cornerstone Stewardship Committee, Jeff Davis, was also interviewed in order to include the role of his third-party company in the school revitalization process. Members of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church were surveyed to gain data indicating the overall level of satisfaction of the congregational members prior to, during, and after the school revitalization.

### **Site Selection**

Sienna Lutheran Academy was selected as the case study for this field project because of its unique method of deliberately choosing to fund and support four separate

ministries rather than choosing to close the doors of its former church and school for good due to declining membership and enrollment as well as changing demographics. The members of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church recognized the neighborhood in which the church was located had considerably changed in its demographics since it began its ministry in 1965. The Alief community was no longer an affluent suburb of the Houston area made up of English speaking, White American families. It had transitioned into a low-income, inner-city neighborhood consisting of Spanish speaking Hispanic families. The church had not changed its mission to meet the needs of the community it was located within. For that reason, the membership had been in rapid decline for several years. The church members and those in leadership roles decided a change in mission must occur in order to continue operating a church otherwise they were faced with the decision of closing the church doors permanently.

Christ the Lord Lutheran School was faced with a similar fate in response to its declining enrollment. The school also needed to recognize the need of the families in the surrounding community no longer matched the mission of the school. The school also faced the decision of whether or not to close its doors unless a drastic change occurred.

For the reasons listed above, Christ the Lord Lutheran Church decided to continue its current mission of ministering to its English speaking members in the Alief community, but also to begin a Hispanic ministry at its Alief location as well. The church also decided to start a second congregation in Sienna Plantation. The families of Christ the Lord Lutheran School decided they could no longer justify operating the school with its current mission in the Alief location and opted to relocate the school to Sienna Plantation in connection with the second congregation rather than change the mission of the school.

The decisions made by the members of this church and the families of this school were not insignificant in their impact on the overall mission of the church and school. Many emotions, opinions, and details went into the meetings discussing the various options for the church and school. In the end, the decision to begin four distinct ministries, including school revitalization was a step never before taken in a Wisconsin Synod church or Lutheran Elementary School. It is for this reason the researcher selected this case study for the topic of this field project.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used descriptive and qualitative data to complete the case study in this field project. Several methods and tools were used to gather and analyze the data pertinent to the case study of Sienna Lutheran Academy and the school revitalization process. One method used in evaluating this school revitalization process was to analyze the mission statements of both the church and school prior to and after this school revitalization process to see if changes were evident in the ministry of the church and school. The mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church prior to the revitalization process was to reach the lost, make disciples of Christ, prepare believers for service to God, and worship Him with our lives. The mission statement of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church since the revitalization process is to carry the changeless, saving Word of God to the changing world around us. The mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran School prior to the revitalization process was to assist parents in their children's education spiritually, intellectually, and socially by teaching a well-rounded and solid curriculum founded on the Word of God, that the student may grow in faith and love for their Savior and may be reunited with Him eternally in heaven. The mission statement of Sienna Lutheran

Academy since the revitalization process is to enlighten and enrich its students by providing excellence in Christ-centered education. By pinpointing and publishing the separate mission statements, the church and school have identified the differences in their ministries and the distinct responsibilities of each.

Another method in studying the school revitalization process was to analyze the demographics of the location of the church and school before and since the revitalization process to see if the change in location was indeed a wise decision. In order to better meet the needs of the congregation and changing community demographics, the congregation enlisted the advice of the synod's Home Mission Board to study the demographics of the greater Houston area and determine a prime location for the new church and school. The Home Mission Board confirmed the changing demographics and lower income status of the community surrounding the former church and school campus did not align with the mission of the church and was not able to financially support a church and school in that location. Missouri City and eventually the community of Sienna Plantation were identified as the prime location for a new church and school. This conclusion was based primarily on the lack of private schools and churches in the area as well as the higher income families the church and school could potentially serve within the community.

Simultaneously, Christ the Lord Lutheran Church began working with Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry, a third-party company, to launch a campaign to determine if it was a wise decision to move to a new location. They confirmed a change in location would be the best decision for the congregation and school. Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry also conducted an awareness and readiness study of the congregation to determine the level of support from the members of the congregation to support and invest in a revitalization



process. Consultants from this third-party company conducted a three month study at the church and presented their findings to the church council and voting members of the congregation. The final recommendation from Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry was for Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School to close their doors at their Alief location and move the church and school to the community of Sienna Plantation.

The congregation decided to forge ahead with the decision to move the church and school to Sienna Plantation, but also decided to keep the church in Alief as a way to continue their ministry in the community there, as well as to expand the Hispanic ministry.

In 2008 the first campaign began to raise money for the revitalization process. Workshops were provided for members of the congregation and the leadership committee to advance this effort. The campaign raised a total of \$565,000 toward the new ministry and revitalization process. These funds allowed the church to begin holding worship services at a rented facility within Sienna Plantation as well as call a second pastor to serve the new mission location. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church purchased land in the community of Sienna Plantation in 2010 and also selected a builder for their new facility as they began working with the development company.

In 2011, a second campaign began which raised \$392,000 toward the new ministry and revitalization process. A one year call was also issued to add a vicar to the faculty to assist in the expansion of the Hispanic ministry at the Alief location. Christ the Lord Lutheran School completed its final academic year in May 2012 with an enrollment of 44 students. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church continued to hold worship services in Alief with 413 members, 10 of which were part of the Hispanic ministry. Many years of faithful

prayer and hard work were coming to fulfillment for this church and school. “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” James 5:16b.

Sienna Lutheran Academy began its first academic year in August of 2012 with an enrollment of 64 students. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church reported 451 members in 2012, 343 were members at the Alief location, 30 of which were part of the Hispanic ministry. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church also began holding its worship services at its Sienna Plantation location in the school gymnasium in August of 2012 with 78 members. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church called its third pastor and Sienna Lutheran Academy added its fifth teacher in August of 2012. In 2013, its second year of operation, Sienna Lutheran Academy has an enrollment of 73 students and has added two new teachers to its faculty. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church has increased its membership to 467. There are currently 321 members at the Alief location - 60 are part of the Hispanic ministry. There are 86 members at the Sienna location. So far, the increased enrollment of students within the school and the increased membership within the church seemed to validate the decision made to complete the revitalization process.

The researcher also analyzed the readiness study conducted by the third-party company of Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry and the results of a study conducted by the Home Mission Board to analyze the demographics and private and public school systems in the state of Texas. In 2010 there were more than 200,000 students enrolled in private schools in Texas (Broughman, 2011). The southern region of the country, Texas included, has 10,483 private schools with 1,550,306 students (Broughman, 2011). The largest number of private schools in 2010 were in suburban locations (Broughman, 2011). There are three Lutheran Elementary Schools serving the greater Houston area of 4,000,000

people. The area surrounding the new location of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Sienna Plantation campus and new school location of Sienna Lutheran Academy has a population of 33,011 people with a median income of \$84,901 and an ethnic makeup of 55% of the residents being White (ZIPskinny, 77459, 2013). The area surrounding Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Alief campus and prior school location has a population of 51,716 with a median income of \$33,979 and an ethnic makeup of 36% of the residents being Hispanic/Latino (ZIPskinny, 77072, 2013). These demographics present a snapshot of the area and people to which the church and school are ministering.

The demographics of the community and area surrounding Sienna Lutheran Academy and Christ the Lord Lutheran Church led to the decision of selecting the community of Sienna Plantation as the site for the new school and church. Sienna Plantation is a community made up of roughly 6,400 homes and approximately 14,000 residents. There are five churches within the community along with three public elementary schools, one public middle school, and one public high school. The next closest Wisconsin Synod congregation is the second location of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Alief campus twelve miles away and the next closest Lutheran Elementary School is twenty-two miles away. One other key factor influencing this decision is that there is no other private school within twenty-five minutes or approximately ten miles of this site. Combining the area demographics, the proximity of other Wisconsin Synod churches and Lutheran Elementary Schools with this key factor mean Sienna Lutheran Academy and Christ the Lord Lutheran Church have a vast area to conduct outreach and minister to the local people.

Money is a necessary part of discussion when determining whether or not a church and school can continue to operate and expand its ministries. Smart financial management and attention to a budget is an essential part of a school revitalization process. Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School were able to balance their budget in 2011-2012, allowing them to continue their current ministries as well as open a new church in Sienna Plantation and a new school, Sienna Lutheran Academy. In 2012-2013 the church and school began operating with separate budgets. The church was able to decrease its budget while the school increased its budget. Increased offerings and tuition have helped to keep the budget on track and allow the church and school to continue their work of spreading God's Word to others.

Descriptive statistics of the budget were used to identify the financial situation of the churches and school in the year prior to and the year after the school revitalization. In the year prior to the revitalization, both the church and school were using a joint budget which dedicated the majority of its funds to salaries of called workers and hired staff as well as loan payments. The categories receiving the least amount of financial support were outreach/marketing and school expenses. The areas of the joint budget receiving the largest amount of income during the year prior to the revitalization were offerings and the Faith-Family-Future fund drive. The areas receiving the least amount of income were the grants from the Greater Houston Mission Team and the Wisconsin Synod Kingdom Workers.

Table 3.1

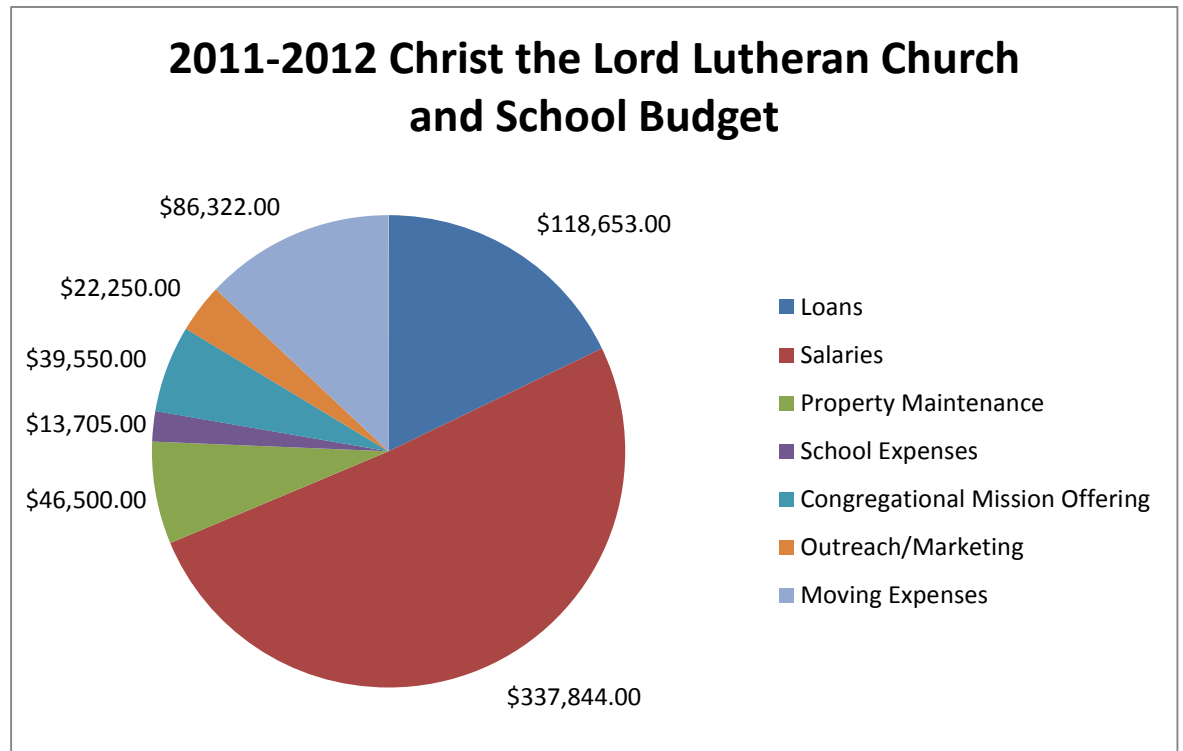
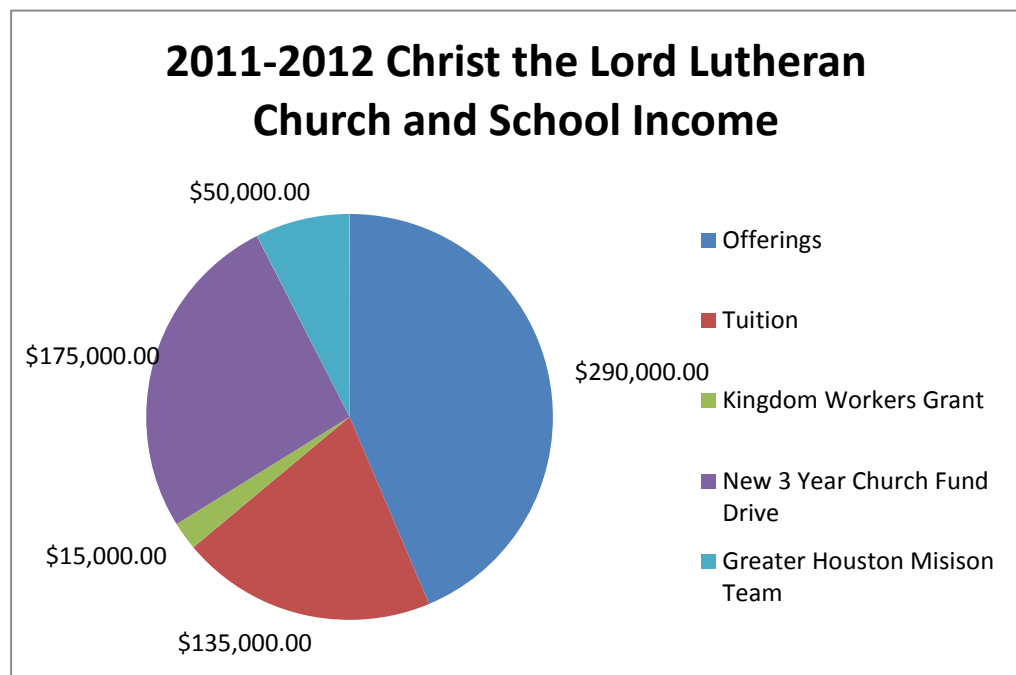


Table 3.2



The annual budget during the year after the school revitalization changed in that both church campuses operate under one budget and the school operates under a separate budget. The annual church budget during this year reported the largest expenses for the salaries of the three pastors as well as the subsidy given to Sienna Lutheran Academy to assist the congregational members with tuition costs. The areas of the church budget with the lowest expenses were the ministries in Sienna Plantation and Alief. The areas of the church budget receiving the largest amount of income were the general fund offerings and the Faith-Family-Future II offerings as part of the second fund drive. The areas of the budget receiving the least amount of income were other private gifts and the grant from the Greater Houston Mission Team.

Table 3.3

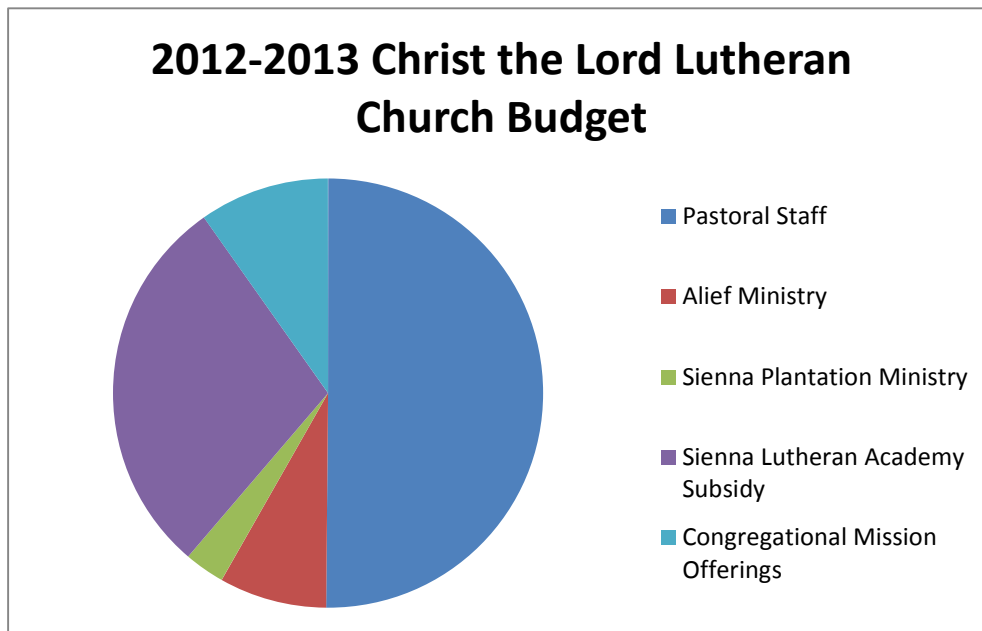
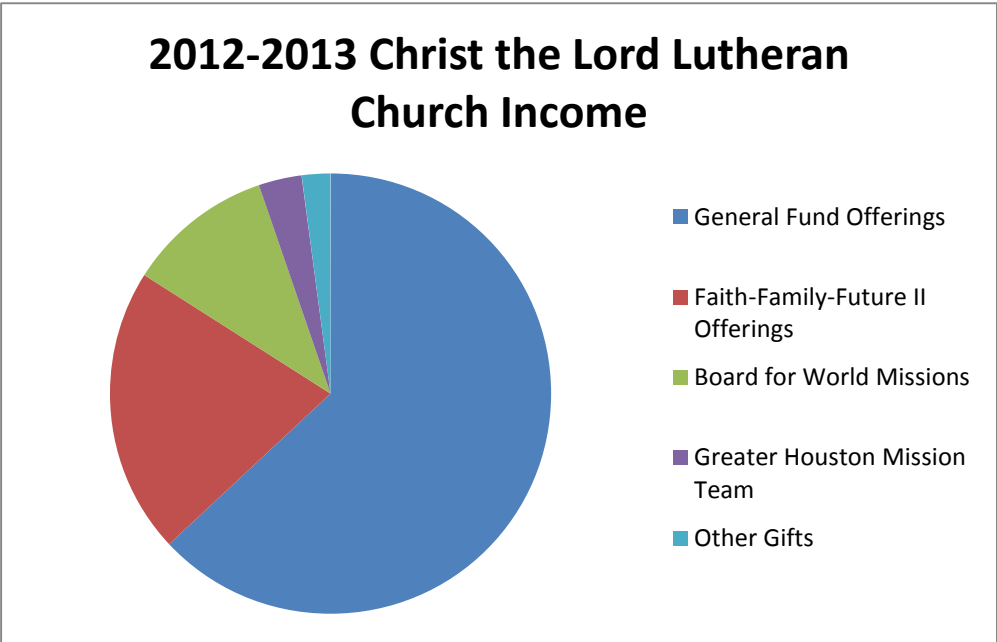


Table 3.4



The annual budget of the school during the year after the revitalization reported the greatest share of the budget for the salaries of the called workers and hired staff as well as the loan. The areas of the annual budget receiving the least amount of financial support were professional development and technology. The area of the annual budget receiving the largest amount of income was tuition. The area of the annual budget receiving the least amount of income was private donations.

Table 3.5

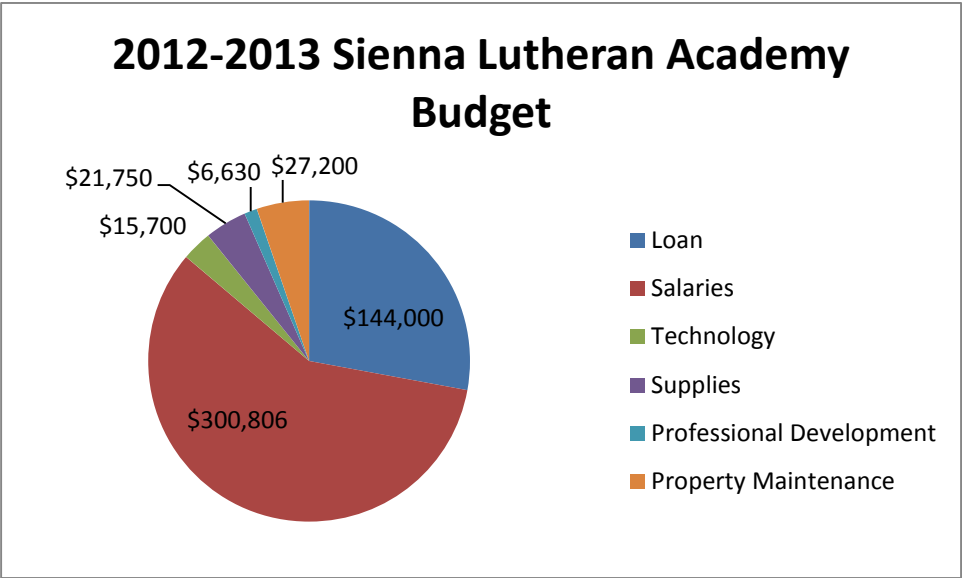
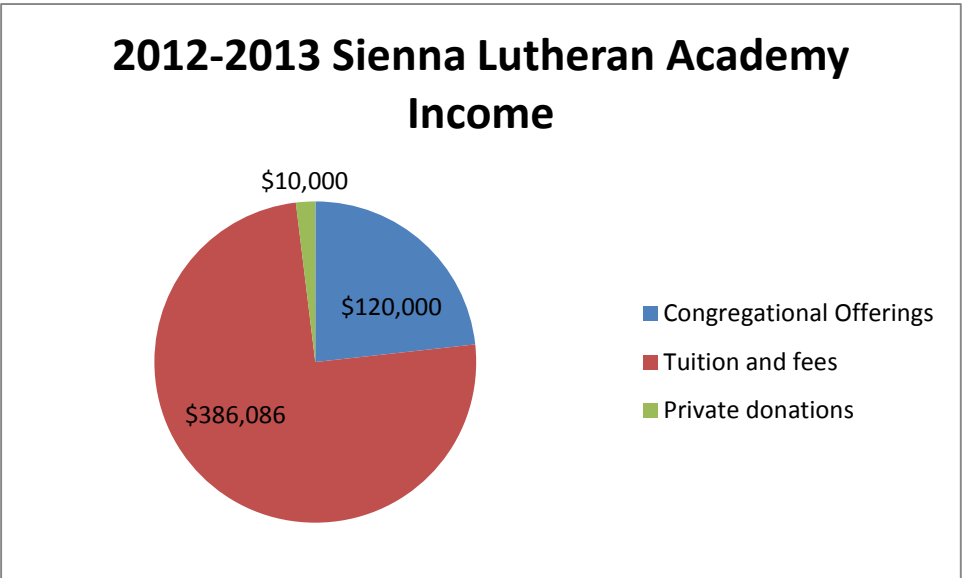


Table 3.6





The first tool used in this case study to gather data was an interview of those in leadership roles within the church and school. A transcript was created which remained consistent for each interview. These transcripts were analyzed to identify common themes and trends that emerged. Overall, the interviews produced many common themes.

The first three questions asked about the mission of the churches on both campuses as well as the school prior to and after the revitalization. A common theme for the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church was that it was the first Wisconsin Synod church in the Houston area with a focus on outreach. Common themes for the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran School were that its primary focus was to serve the children of church members and offer a strong Christian education. Common themes for the mission of Sienna Lutheran Academy were that it continues to serve the children of church members while reaching out to children within the community of Sienna Plantation.

Questions four, five, and six focused on the process of completing the school revitalization and those involved in the decision making process. Common themes identified for steps in the revitalization process were searching for land in the Houston suburb of Missouri City, hiring the third-party company of Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry, enlisting the support of the congregation by hosting Faith-Family-Future fund drives, purchasing land in Sienna Plantation and forming a committee to oversee the building process of Sienna Lutheran Academy from start to finish. A common theme identified for the reasoning behind the decision to complete the school revitalization was the financial struggles of a mission minded congregation. A common theme of those involved in the decision making process was the congregational members and the Church Council.

Questions seven through twelve help recognize key features of all properties and locations for both school campuses. Common themes recognized about the location and community surrounding Christ the Lord Lutheran School were the lower-income, inner-city, and Hispanic community. Common themes recognized about the location and community surrounding Sienna Lutheran Academy were the upper class, suburban community. Common themes recognized about the facility and grounds at Christ the Lord Lutheran School were deteriorating and outdated. Common themes recognized about the facility and grounds at Sienna Lutheran Academy were modern and spacious.

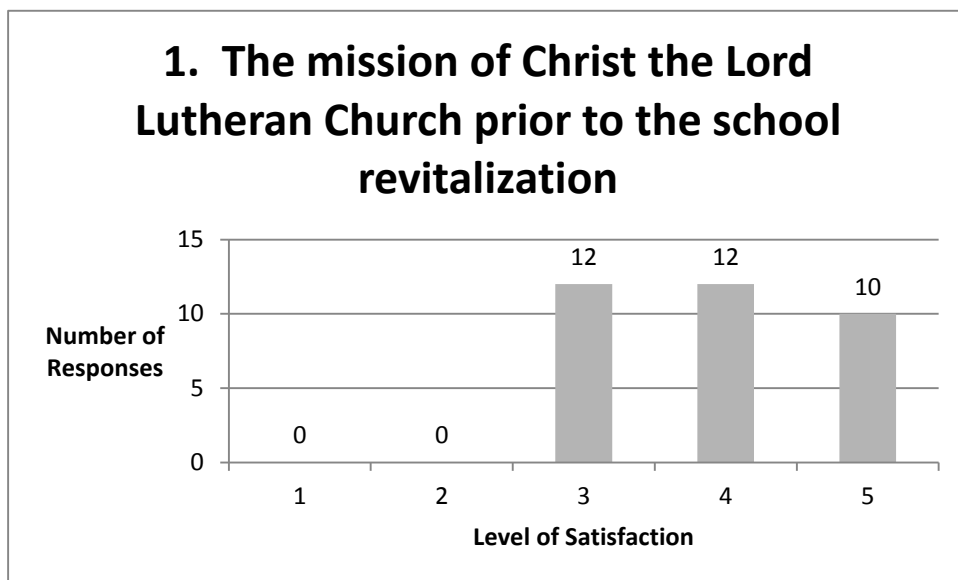
Question number thirteen contained vital information for the researcher in linking the data from the interviews to the data from the surveys. Common themes acknowledged in how the revitalization process effected the congregation were positive, clarifying, and unifying.

Questions fourteen through seventeen dealt with the budget of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School prior to the revitalization process in comparison with Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and Sienna Lutheran Academy after the revitalization process. A common theme identified in the annual budget of the church and school prior to the revitalization was a smaller joint budget based on congregational offerings. Common themes identified in the annual budget of the churches and school after the revitalization process were larger but separate budgets based primarily on tuition and offset by congregational offerings.

A second tool used by the researcher to gather data was a nine question survey administered to the members of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church. Eight percent of the

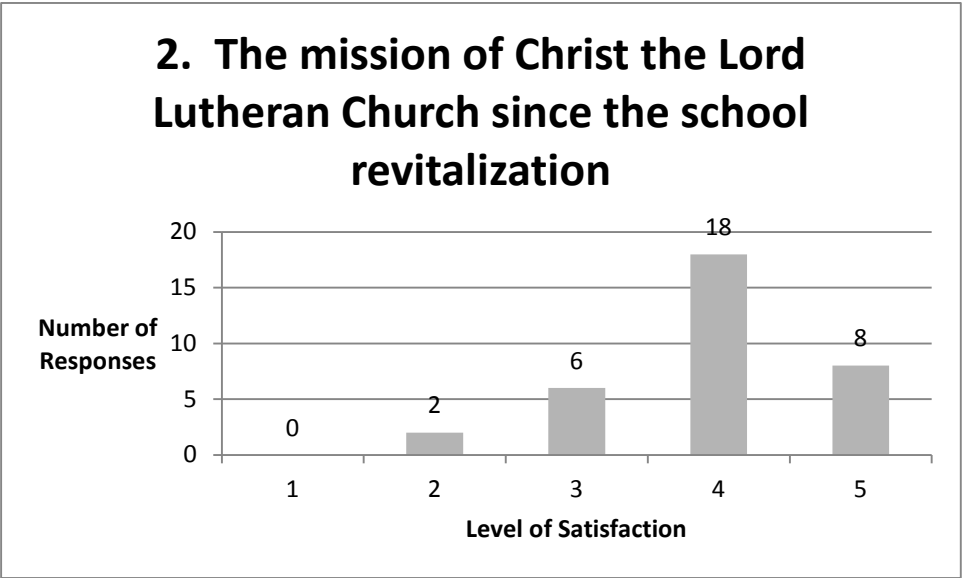
congregational members completed the survey. Each survey question asked the congregational member to rate his or her overall level of satisfaction for the missions and locations of both churches and schools. The survey results indicated a high level of satisfaction among the congregational members for the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church prior to the revitalization and a moderate level of satisfaction for the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church since the revitalization.

Table 3.7



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

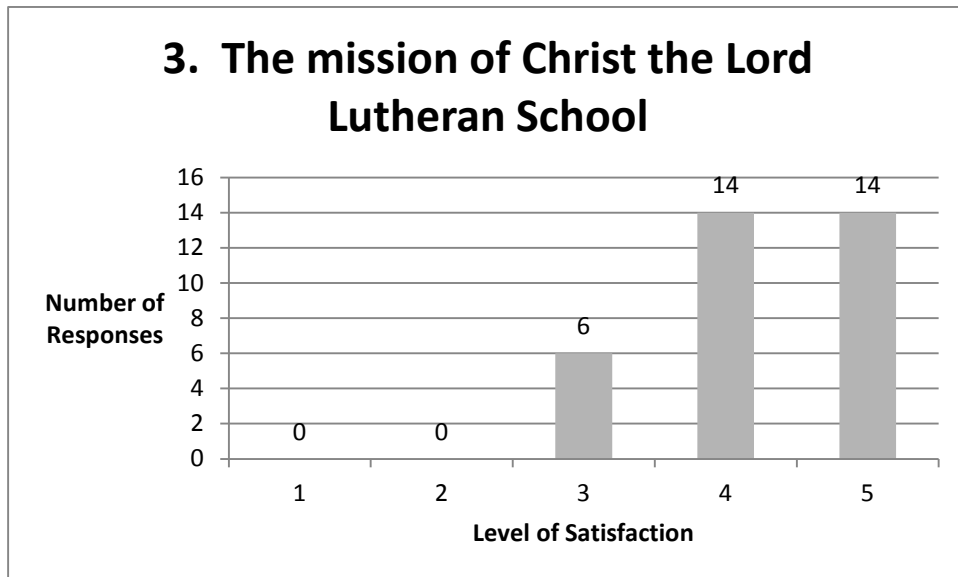
Table 3.8



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

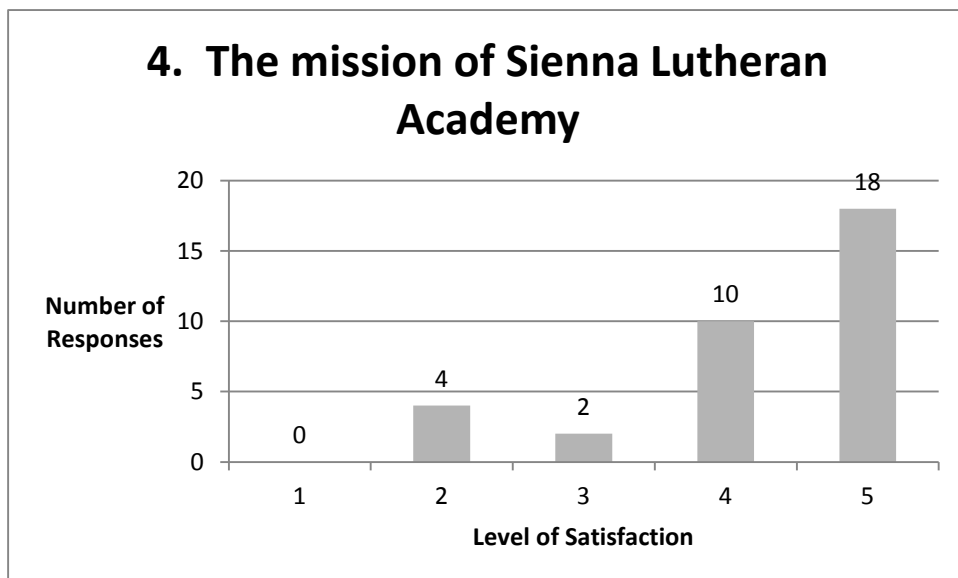
The survey results indicated a moderately-high level of satisfaction for the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran School and a high level of satisfaction for the mission of Sienna Lutheran Academy.

Table 3.9



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

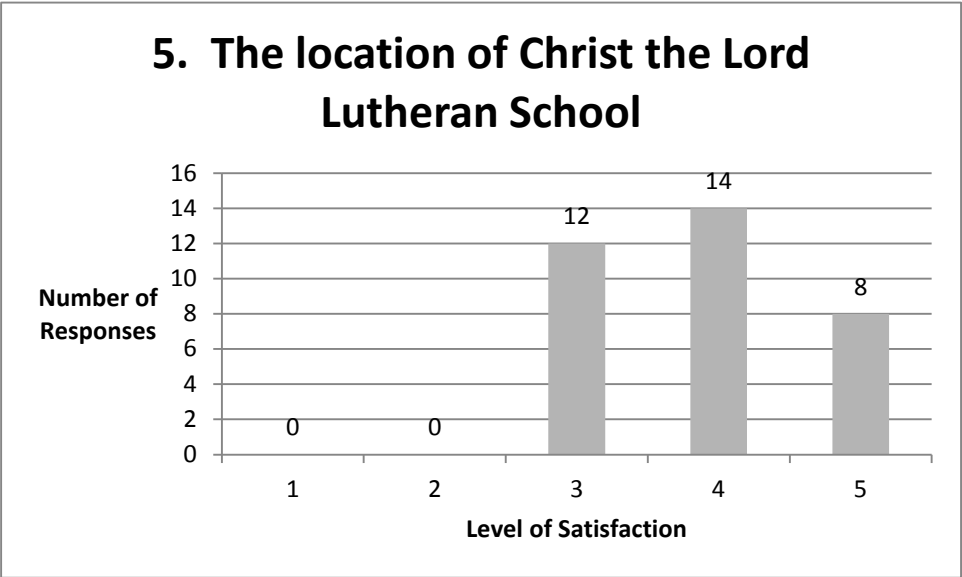
Table 3.10



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

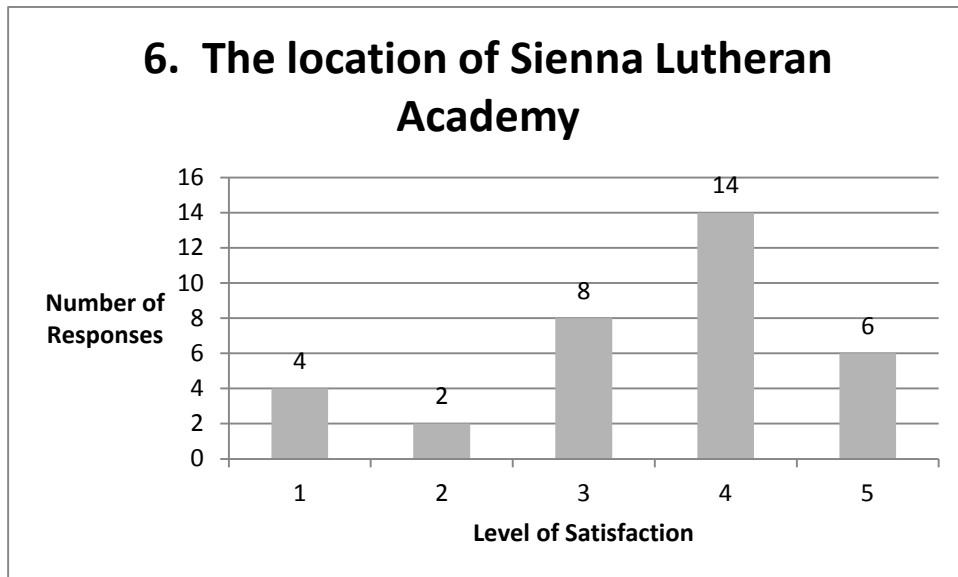
The survey results indicated a moderately-high level of satisfaction for the location of Christ the Lord Lutheran School and a mixed level of satisfaction for the location of Sienna Lutheran Academy.

Table 3.11



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

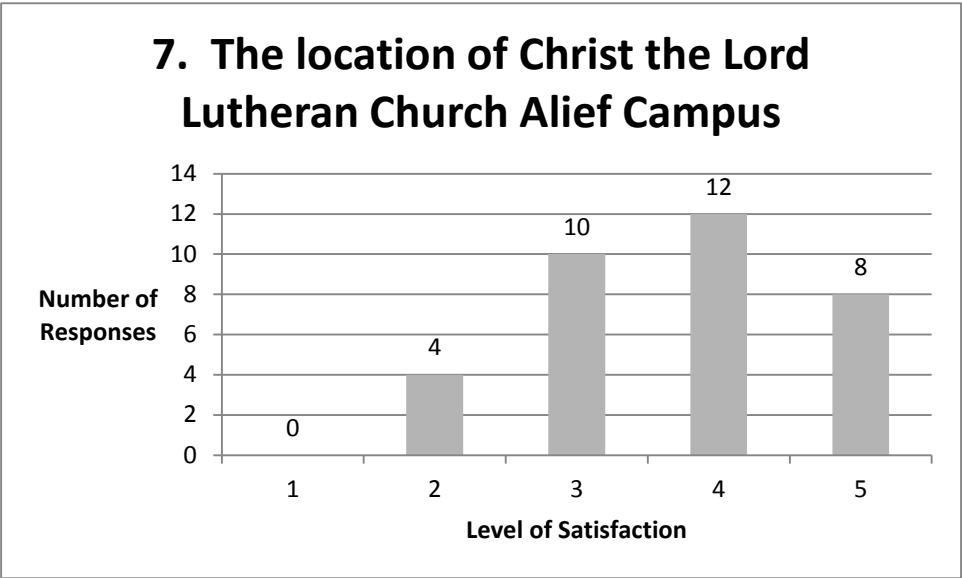
Table 3.12



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

The survey results indicated a moderately-high level of satisfaction for the location of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Alief campus and a high level of satisfaction for the location of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Sienna Plantation campus.

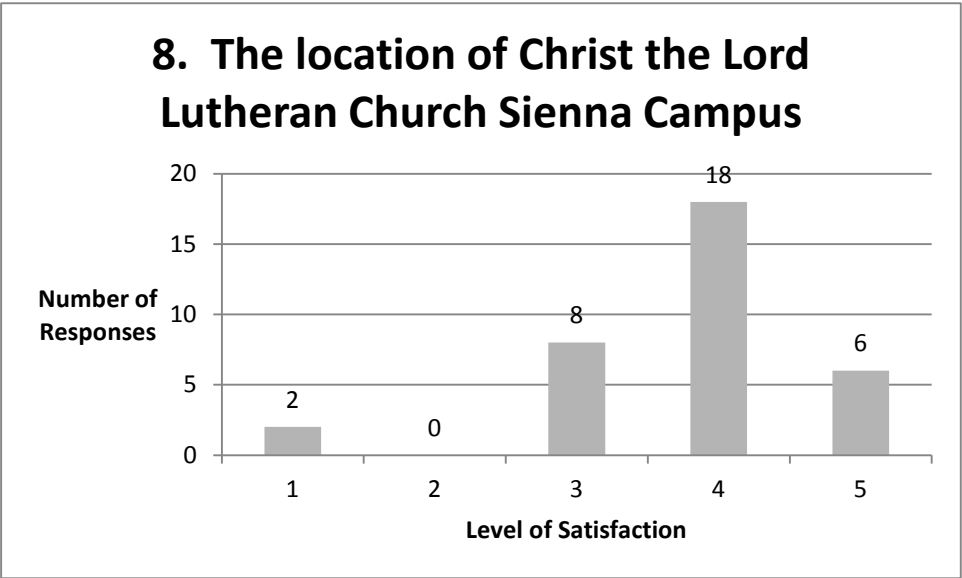
Table 3.13



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied



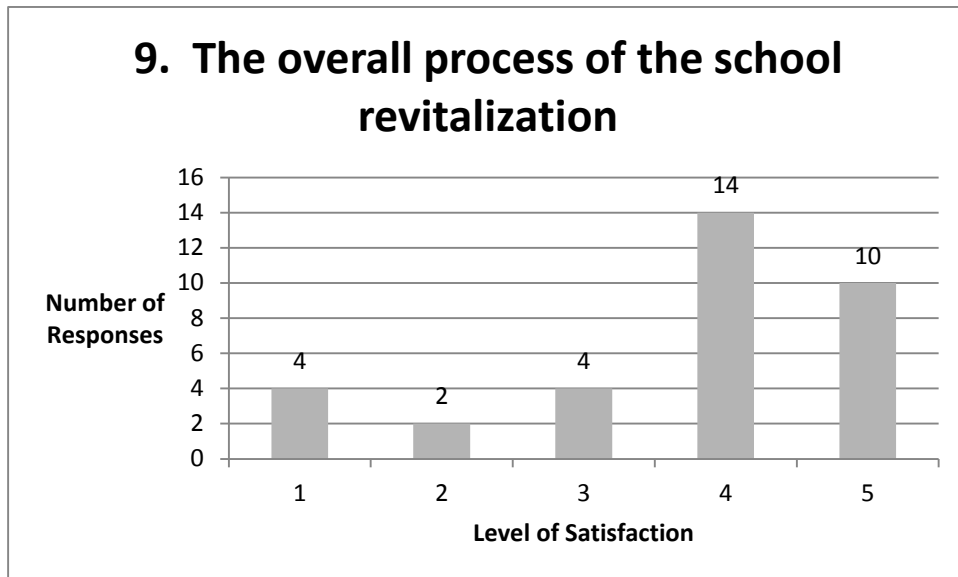
Table 3.14



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

The survey results also indicated a mixed level of satisfaction for the overall process of the school revitalization.

Table 3.15



\*Level of Satisfaction Indicator      1=Extremely Dissatisfied 5=Extremely Satisfied

### Limitations of the design

The school revitalization process used in this case study is something unprecedented by a Wisconsin Synod church or a Lutheran Elementary School. Some of the participants were located in different states and countries and were more difficult to connect with. The number of members to return their surveys as well as the number of individuals in leadership positions who agreed to an interview was less than the researcher had originally anticipated. Since this case study pertains to one Wisconsin Synod congregation and one Lutheran Elementary School it may have factors specific to this church and this school which could limit the amount of other Wisconsin Synod churches and Lutheran Elementary Schools it could be used by as a resource. The findings of this study are limited to Sienna Lutheran Academy and may not be generalizable to other situations.

## **Reflective Essay**

### **Introduction**

Each church and school within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has its own unique circumstances, characteristics, and ministry. Yet, they are united in the beliefs and truths they continue to preach to others. Many factors influence the level of success or failure a church or school experiences. The purpose of this field project is to study the school revitalization process of Sienna Lutheran Academy in Missouri City, Texas. The study included input from pastors, faculty, congregation members, current parents, and parents of students. Analysis will involve studying and reporting the results of the study.

### **Conclusions**

The goal of this field project was to better understand the dynamics influencing the school revitalization of Sienna Lutheran Academy and to suggest a model that may be considered by other schools. In order to create a model of this case study, the dynamics influencing the school revitalization including the location, enrollment, and budget of both the church and school prior to and since the revitalization process have been carefully evaluated and analyzed. Those in key leadership roles have been interviewed and the church members have been surveyed to gain perspective on the overall opinion of this school revitalization process.

The location of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Alief campus is now aligned with its mission in that it continues to hold services and offer Bible studies in English as well as expand its Hispanic ministry to better reflect the surrounding community. In response to the changing demographics and household income in the Alief area, Christ the Lord

Lutheran School has been closed and relocated, allowing more space for the English and Hispanic ministry at the church to grow and flourish.

The location of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church-Sienna Plantation campus is now aligned with its mission in supporting Sienna Lutheran Academy by aligning its new mission statement to reflect the recent move and new focus of this congregation. Sienna Lutheran Academy has also changed its mission statement to better communicate the mission of the new school to the surrounding community.

A few concerns exist regarding the location of the churches and school. Those within the community of Sienna Plantation think the location within the community could've been better planned by selecting a location off the main road rather than a side street. Members at the Alief location feel it requires more time and money to travel from the church in Alief to the new school in Sienna Plantation and would've liked to see a better compromise made for the distance between the two locations.

The enrollment of both church campuses continues to grow as each distinct mission and ministry is carried out by the pastors and members of the congregations. The focus on outreach to the surrounding communities and the finances devoted to marketing and outreach have allowed the membership to increase by welcoming visitors into their worship services, Bible studies, and church activities each week. Many of these visitors have taken Bible Information Classes and have been confirmed as members of the congregations.

The enrollment of Sienna Lutheran Academy has continued to rise each academic year as the school begins to build a positive reputation within the community of Sienna

Plantation. It also credits its increased enrollment to the continued outreach and marketing efforts of the Board of Education, faculty, and school families. The increased enrollment each year allows more financial support for the school to increase its faculty while still maintaining smaller class sizes and also expanding their resources to offer more educational opportunities for its students.

The enrollment has been steadily increasing each year and is on track to continue in this trend. The outlook for enrollment in the upcoming 2014-2015 academic year has predicted an enrollment of 100 students. If this trend continues, as it has proven to in its first two years of operation, the school will be able to reach many more families with the saving message of God's Word while also adding several new faculty and staff members to better serve the increasing enrollment.

Some of the people interviewed or surveyed voiced their opinions about the enrollment of the school. They feel the current level of exposure within the community could be increased to allow for further growth for both the church membership and school enrollment. Another person expressed excitement over the future of the school and what possibilities it has in this new location to increase enrollment even beyond what is projected.

The separate budgets and income have allowed both church campuses and the school to operate separately yet remained joined financially. The increased offerings and tuition have allowed the budgets to increase. The increased budgets have made it possible for new ministries to begin while offering continued financial support to its current ministries. Increased financial support has also allowed for the facilities to be maintained

and improved. The attention to detail in the budgets by the Church Council and leadership teams has been extremely beneficial in the success of this school revitalization process.

The budget has allowed the school to operate within its means and cover its expenses while allowing for areas of flexibility. Enough funds were raised and secured prior to the start of this revitalization that the school and church had money set aside for unexpected or unforeseen events or situations along the way. The church members and school families have been supportive in their offerings and donations to see the ministry of both church and school can continue at its best. Once the school reaches an enrollment of 85 students in the 2014-2015 academic year, it will be self-sufficient. A grant was also secured from the Church Extension Fund allowing Sienna Lutheran Academy to begin ground breaking for athletic fields and a playground on its property. Thus far, the budget and monetary issues or concerns have been minimal for this school revitalization process and no concerns or comments were made regarding the budget throughout this school revitalization process.

Those in key leadership roles at both the church and school were interviewed for their input about the revitalization process. Church members were surveyed for their opinions and comments about the revitalization process as well. Based on the results of the interviews and surveys, those in leadership roles as well as the church members have an overall positive perspective about this school revitalization process. In general, the overall level of satisfaction among those interviewed and surveyed about the school revitalization process was high.

The results of this case study have assisted the researcher in creating a model of the school revitalization process at Sienna Lutheran Academy. The results of the dynamics influencing this case study and the data collected and analyzed served as the basis of this model.

### **Sienna Lutheran Academy School Revitalization Model**

#### **Year One**

- Determine the need for a change in ministry due to declining membership and enrollment
- Continue current ministries
- Conduct Bible studies in members' homes in suburban communities exploring the possibility of a second congregation
- Contact the Home Mission Board for support in searching for land to purchase for new location of second congregation and new school

#### **Year Two**

- Define mission of church and school both currently and for future revitalization
- Continue current ministries
- Begin searching for land to purchase for second congregation and new school
- Contact and hire Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry to complete a readiness study of the congregation
- Hold congregational meetings to determine level of commitment and support among members
- Schedule final presentation by Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry of readiness study results and recommendations
- Conduct a voters' meeting to decide whether or not to begin the school revitalization process or to continue worship services but close the school
- Launch first Faith-Family-Future campaign

#### **Year Three**

- Continue current ministries

- Select community of Sienna Plantation as target location for the second congregation and new school
- Rent space inside a preschool building in Sienna Plantation and begin advertising worship services
- Begin worship services in rented facility
- Call a second pastor to focus on second congregation and new school
- Begin Hispanic outreach at Alief campus

**Year Four**

- Continue current ministries
- Grow Hispanic ministry in Alief
- Grow Sienna Plantation congregation
- Purchase land in Sienna Plantation
- Select a builder
- Begin working with development company

**Year Five**

- Continue English and Hispanic ministries in Alief
- Prepare school for last academic year and transition to new location
- Continue holding worship services in rented facility in Sienna Plantation
- Break ground for second congregation and new school building
- Launch the second Faith-Family-Future campaign
- Call a vicar to focus on Hispanic ministry in Alief

**Year Six**

- Continue English and Hispanic ministries in Alief
- Continue holding worship services in rented facility in Sienna Plantation
- Set date of completion for building project
- Begin advertising for new school
- Call a fourth full-time teacher and fifth part-time teacher for Sienna Lutheran Academy
- Call a third pastor to serve at Alief campus
- Move the school from the old location to the new location
- Hold dedication church service
- Hold opening school service
- Start school at Sienna Lutheran Academy



Moving forward, other schools who may consider the model suggested from this case study should recognize the limitations specific to the school revitalization at Sienna Lutheran Academy. The higher-income community of Sienna Plantation, the grants given to assist in the financial responsibility for this building project, and the third-parties involved in this process are all unique to this case study.

### **Recommendations**

This case study would be a valuable resource for other churches and schools to consider before embarking on a similar path or when considering a similar situation. One recommendation made from the school revitalization process at Sienna Lutheran Academy is to ensure the congregation is ready for a mission field and opportunity they otherwise wouldn't have chosen or focused on. This will help as challenges arise along the way and as the mission or vision of the church and school changes to better meet the needs of those whom they serve. It is also important to remember the revitalization process in this case study is still a work in progress as it is forging along a path never before embarked upon. Recognizing and realizing the areas of strength and the areas of improvement for the church and school are techniques which will ultimately benefit all parties.

A second recommendation from this case study is to make sure the research is done well in advance and all facts have been carefully considered before making the decision to complete a school revitalization process. The effort this congregation made to enlist the help of a third-party company as well as other synodical entities played a huge part in determining the readiness of the congregation and the ideal location for optimal growth.

A third recommendation from the school revitalization at Sienna Lutheran Academy is to allow more funds than anticipated and a longer timeline than what is originally predicted to safeguard against any unforeseen expenses or events which will most certainly arise. By doing so, the church and school will be able to make the best decision possible rather than the most cost effective one.

Based upon the evidence given, the input and opinions of those in key leadership roles as well as church members, and the data and research conducted and analyzed for this case study, this school revitalization process has proven to be a success for this congregation and school. The model outlined in this case study of school revitalization at Sienna Lutheran Academy along with prayerful consideration by a congregation and school could be a positive start to an exciting journey of revitalization.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

1. What was the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church prior to the school revitalization?
2. What was the mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran School?
3. What is the mission of Sienna Lutheran Academy?
4. What was the step-by-step process of completing the school revitalization?
5. What was the reasoning behind the decision to complete the school revitalization?
6. Who was involved in the decision making process of the school revitalization?
7. How would you describe the location of Christ the Lord Lutheran School?
8. How would you describe the location of Sienna Lutheran Academy?
9. How would you describe the facility and grounds at Christ the Lord Lutheran School?
10. How would you describe the facility and grounds at Sienna Lutheran Academy?
11. How would you describe the community surrounding Christ the Lord Lutheran School?
12. How would you describe the community surrounding Sienna Lutheran Academy?
13. How has this process effected the congregation of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church?
14. What was the annual budget of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church prior to the school revitalization?
15. What is the annual budget of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church after the school revitalization?
16. What was the annual budget of Christ the Lord Lutheran School prior to the school revitalization?
17. What is the annual budget of Sienna Lutheran Academy after the school revitalization?

Comments:

## Appendix B: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church Member Survey

Rate your level of satisfaction on the following areas:

1. The mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church prior to the school revitalization

Extremely  
Satisfied

Extremely  
Dissatisfied

5

4

3

2

1

2. The mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church since the school revitalization

Extremely  
Satisfied

Extremely  
Dissatisfied

5

4

3

2

1

3. The mission of Christ the Lord Lutheran School

Extremely  
Satisfied

Extremely  
Dissatisfied

5

4

3

2

1

4. The mission of Sienna Lutheran Academy

Extremely  
Satisfied

Extremely  
Dissatisfied

5

4

3

2

1

5. The location of Christ the Lord Lutheran School

Extremely  
Satisfied

Extremely  
Dissatisfied

5

4

3

2

1

6. The location of Sienna Lutheran Academy

Extremely Satisfied					Extremely Dissatisfied
5	4	3	2	1	

7. The locations of Christ the Lord Lutheran Church

Extremely Satisfied					Extremely Dissatisfied
5	4	3	2	1	

8. The process of the school revitalization

Extremely Satisfied					Extremely Dissatisfied
5	4	3	2	1	

Comments:

**Appendix C: Faith-Family-Future Informational Packet**

\*See attached files

**Appendix D: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and School Budget 2011- 2012****2011-2012 Budget****Loans**

Traditional Principal	5,635
Church Extension Fund Principal	15,744
Traditional Interest	14,438
Church Extension Fund Interest	33,636
Church Extension Fund Building Loan (1/2 year)	49,200

<b>Total Loan Payment</b>	<b>118,653</b>
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**Elders**

Christ the Lord Programs	3,900
Christ the Lord Called Worker Salary	202,369
Health Care	54,624
Housing	65,148
Sacrament	2,200
Supplies	4,220
Secretary	5,383

**Trustees**

Insurance	16,000
Maintenance	6,000
Noncyclical	0
Copier	8,500
Utilities	16,000

**Education**

Supplies	1,180
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Books	2,860
Materials	1,340
Programs	775
Facility Maintenance	200
Conferences	1,350
Extended Care	4,000
Substitutes	2,000
<b>Stewardship</b>	
Supplies	400
Congregational Mission Offering	39,150
<b>Evangelism</b>	
Vacation Bible School	2,000
Brochures	15,000
Outreach	1,500
Facility Rent	3,750
Visitor Follow-up	0
Welcome Packages	0
Miscellaneous	0
<b>School Move</b>	
Soft Costs	59,322
New Teacher	27,000
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>665,000</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Offerings	290,000
Tuition	135,000



Kingdom Workers Grant	15,000
New 3 Year Christ the Lord Fund Drive	175,000
Greater Houston Mission Team	50,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>665,000</b>

## **Appendix E: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church and Sienna Lutheran Academy Budget 2012-2013**

### **Income:**

General Fund Offerings	300,000
<i>(This would average \$5,770 every week)</i>	
Faith-Family-Future II Offerings	100,000
<i>(This would average \$1,923 every week)</i>	
Board for World Missions pastoral help (cover Schlomer)	36,000
Board for World Missions pastoral help (Hispanic Ministry)	15,000
Greater Houston Mission Team (Sienna pastor)	15,000
Other (Interest, Designated gifts, etc.)	10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>476,000</b>

### **Putting God's Gifts to Work**

Pastoral Staff (3 full salaried positions)	207,619
Alief Ministry (Serving and maintenance)	33,500
<i>(See attached break-down)</i>	
Sienna Ministry (Serving, Maint. In SLA budget)	12,500
<i>(See attached break-down)</i>	
Sienna Lutheran Academy Subsidy	120,000
Congregational Mission Offerings	40,500
<i>(For WELS missions and schools)</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>414,841</b>
<b><i>(\$61,881 in the black if all met)</i></b>	

**Sienna Lutheran Academy****Income:**

Congregational Offerings	120,000
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Tuition and fees	386,086
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*(See current enrollment note below)*

Other (Interest, designated gifts, etc.)	10,000
--	--------

<b>Total</b>	<b>516,086</b>
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**Expenses:**

School Expenses (See appendix B)	<b>516,086</b>
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**5/29 Current Enrollment (Confident are coming)****50 Children**

7 called workers'	3,500
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20 member kids	70,000
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23 prospect families	161,000
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<b>Current projected total</b>	<b>234,500</b>
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*Notice on the budget we need 386,086 in tuition and fees to balance the budget. Current enrollment leaves us 151,586 short. Steve has contact with enough students who have shown interest to put us in the black, but we won't know how many enroll until later this summer. 25 more students paying full tuition would cover this budget, but understand that the budget will also need to adjust as we get more teaching help (part-time or full call). There are two other pieces to this puzzle. One piece is the money left in the budgeted general fund offerings and income, \$61,881. The other piece of this puzzle is the money we currently have in the bank. After spending \$60,000 in soft costs by the end of this budget year we will still have about \$75,000 left as an emergency fund. It would be great if we do not have to use any of this, but if we don't pick up more students that money is what would have to be used to cover these costs.*

**Alief and Sienna Ministry Break-down****Alief**

5,250	Pastors' travel, conferences, continuing ed., cell phones
5,000	Evangelism fliers, postage and signage
2,500	Sacrament, worship and instruction
2,000	Supplies and miscellaneous
18,750	Insurance, Utilities and maintenance for Alief campus
<b>33,500</b>	<b>Total</b>

**Sienna**

5,250	Pastors' travel, conferences, continuing ed., cell phones
2,750	Evangelism fliers, postage and signage
2,500	Sacrament, worship and instruction
2,000	Supplies and miscellaneous
<b>12,500</b>	<b>Total</b>

**Sienna Lutheran Academy Budget  
2012-2013**

Mortgage Interest	144,000
Phone, Internet, Emergency monitoring, permits	3,500
Principal and 3 Teacher Packages	253,306
Secretary	14,000
Insurance	17,000
Copier/Maintenance	8,500
Utilities	15,000
Pest Control	1,200
Outside Landscaping	5,000
Cleaning Company	5,000
Office supplies, postage, First Aid	350
Cleaning Supplies and Equipment - paper towels, bags, etc.	3,000
Books	11,000
Paper	1,000
Classroom Materials	2,400
Programs	2,200
Maintenance	1,000
Conference and Continuing Ed	3,000
Extended Care Aides	4,500
Substitute Teaching/ Part Time Teachers	12,000
WELS Student money	330
Technology	1,500
Athletic Equipment	1,000
Music	200
Standardized Testing	800
Library	0
Accreditation	3,000
Accelerated Reader	0
Professional Organizations	300
Miscellaneous	2,000

**Total**

**516,086**

**Appendix F: Sienna Lutheran Academy School Revitalization Model****Year One**

- Determine the need for a change in ministry due to declining membership and enrollment
- Continue current ministries
- Conduct Bible studies in members' homes in suburban communities exploring the possibility of a second congregation
- Contact the Home Mission Board for support in searching for land to purchase for new location of second congregation and new school

**Year Two**

- Define mission of church and school both currently and for future revitalization
- Continue current ministries
- Begin searching for land to purchase for second congregation and new school
- Contact and hire Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry to complete a readiness study of the congregation
- Hold congregational meetings to determine level of commitment and support among members
- Schedule final presentation by Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry of readiness study results and recommendations
- Conduct a voters' meeting to decide whether or not to begin the school revitalization process or to continue worship services but close the school
- Launch first Faith-Family-Future campaign

**Year Three**

- Continue current ministries
- Select community of Sienna Plantation as target location for the second congregation and new school
- Rent space inside a preschool building in Sienna Plantation and begin advertising worship services
- Begin worship services in rented facility
- Call a second pastor to focus on second congregation and new school
- Begin Hispanic outreach at Alief campus

**Year Four**

- Continue current ministries
- Grow Hispanic ministry in Alief

- Grow Sienna Plantation congregation
- Purchase land in Sienna Plantation
- Select a builder
- Begin working with development company

**Year Five**

- Continue English and Hispanic ministries in Alief
- Prepare school for last academic year and transition to new location
- Continue holding worship services in rented facility in Sienna Plantation
- Break ground for second congregation and new school building
- Launch the second Faith-Family-Future campaign
- Call a vicar to focus on Hispanic ministry in Alief

**Year Six**

- Continue English and Hispanic ministries in Alief
- Continue holding worship services in rented facility in Sienna Plantation
- Set date of completion for building project
- Begin advertising for new school
- Call a fourth full-time teacher and fifth part-time teacher for Sienna Lutheran Academy
- Call a third pastor to serve at Alief campus
- Move the school from the old location to the new location
- Hold dedication church service
- Hold opening school service
- Start school at Sienna Lutheran Academy

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