



Turnaround Churches in the WELS

You'll find below a list of common themes that emerged after the subject congregations were studied in depth. Much more was learned, but this summarizes the key findings.

Important Clarification: The researchers assumed (and frequently mentioned to those within the studied churches), that no congregation can be revitalized and “turn around” without God changing people’s hearts and transforming their lives through his Means of Grace. Since this was assumed and stated up front, “spiritual growth” was usually not cited as a key factor associated with turnaround.

Common Themes in the Summary Reports

Unanimous Themes

- ☒ A new pastor (whose leadership, gifts, personality, energy, philosophy, and style set the pace)
- ☒ An “other” and “outreach” focus
- ☒ Community awareness and involvement, with intentional strategies
- ☒ Member involvement in ministry, empowered and encouraged

Nearly Unanimous Themes

- ☒ A climate of permission
- ☒ Outside assistance (e.g. Parish Assistance, Mission Counselors, WELS Kingdom Workers, plus reading/exploring ideas)
- ☒ Adding staff (pastor, vicar, staff minister, secretary, teacher)

Significant Majority Themes

- ☒ A vision-driven planning process (frequently provided by Parish Assistance)
- ☒ Additional worship opportunities, with variety in style
- ☒ A culture of warmth, welcome, and caring
- ☒ Attractive facilities (new/expanded), sometimes as a result of relocation
- ☒ Children’s ministries, especially preschool, also LES refocused on the community

Frequently Mentioned Themes

- ☒ A patient shift in attitude (to joy, optimism, confidence, a “can do” spirit)
- ☒ More significant (and biblically appropriate) involvement of women
- ☒ More emphasis on spiritual growth, including prayer ministry
- ☒ Pastor making visits (on both current and prospective members)
- ☒ Losing (or removing) dissident or divisive members