

Mission and Vision Statements
Concordia Evangelical Lutheran Church
Duluth, Minnesota

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Environmental Stewardship added February 2009

Mission Statement:

To know Christ Jesus and the power of his resurrection

Vision Statement:

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, to make disciples of ourselves and others by intentional nurture of these Faith Practices:

- To worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- To pray unceasingly
- To watch and to wait for God's guidance
- To be obedient to God
- To love God and to love and serve others
- To seek to have the Word dwell in us richly
- To practice environmental stewardship
- To be sent as God's apostles in all arenas of our lives

What does this mean? This is Martin Luther's question asked throughout the *Small Catechism*, and it still applies. A mission statement is a succinct statement of purpose. It answers the question, "Why are we here?" For the church, a mission statement is not something we make up; rather, it is given by God. "To know Christ Jesus and the power of his resurrection" comes from the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:10. If Paul wanted to "know Christ," how much more do we?! The mission statement is both personal and communal. It is both for the new Christian and the life-long one. The "power of his resurrection" is the power that transforms not only individuals and congregations; it transforms the world. For a world longing for meaning and redemption, this is Good News indeed.

What does this mean? A vision statement is a "fleshing out" of a mission statement. It articulates how we intend to live into our mission statement. Each of the points in the vision statement is fleshed out below. How do they impact our individual and corporate lives? How do they make a difference? How do they work with our motto: *Excellence in ministry, diligence in discipleship, servanthood in leadership*? How do they intersect with the Faith Practices:

- * Worship weekly
- * Study life-long
- * Serve willingly
- * Pray daily
- * Give generously
- * Encourage lovingly
- * Invite enthusiastically

Finally, how do the mission and vision statements inform how we live out our 65th

Anniversary theme: “Blessed to be a Blessing”?

To worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Corporate worship is the *main thing* for the church. Darrell Guder asserts, “[t]he center of any mission community’s organized life is its corporate worship.”¹ In worship, we are *formed* into being the people of God. Worship is performative; it is also prescriptive. The phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* (literally, “the law of prayer is the law of belief”) reminds us that we *believe* and *become* the words that we *hear* and *pray* and *sing*. Authentic worship incorporates all the other faith practices, and all the faith practices flow from worship. In this sense, worship is primary. Worship is constitutive of the church in the sense that the church is the assembly of people where the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered. Episcopalian Rodney Clapp insists that “[l]iturgy is the public work par excellence of the church – something that, if omitted, would mean the church was no longer the church.”² Martin Luther regarded prayer, public praise and thanksgiving to God as one of the *marks of the church*. In corporate worship, we are transformed to the place where all of life is worship. Nathan Mitchell writes:

To be is to worship; human existence is inescapably liturgical, doxological. Doxology . . . is “ontologically constitutive”; it is what makes our existence as human subjects possible. . . . Quite simply, we become ourselves only in the act of praising God.³

To pray unceasingly

Christians are invited to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Jesus regularly spent hours alone in prayer with the Father. He taught his disciples to pray the prayer we call the *Lord’s Prayer*, addressing God the Father with the intimate and endearing word, *Abba*. It is a privilege to come before God in all circumstances in prayer, and God promises to hear us. Prayer can be individual or corporate, simple or profound, conversational or formalized, spoken or sung, silent or out loud. Martin Luther daily prayed the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed. He acknowledged that the busier he was, the more time he needed in prayer. As a *core practice*, prayer transforms us and bends our will to God’s will. In the Garden of Gethsemane immediately before his arrest, Jesus prayed to his Father, “. . . yet, not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

¹Darrell L. Guder, “Missional Structures: The Particular Community,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 241.

²Cited by Thomas H. Schattauer, “Liturgical Assembly as Locus of Mission,” in *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, ed. Thomas H. Schattauer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 4.

³Cited by Schattauer, *ibid.*, 14.

There are many ways to pray. At Concordia, one of the formulas for prayer that we teach is ACTS – Adoration (with the attention focused on God), Confession (taking a personal inventory; the prayer of *examin*), Thanksgiving (with the focus on all that God has given us and allowing ourselves to be shaped by God’s perspective), and finally Supplication (petitions for the needs of ourselves and others).

To watch and to wait for God’s guidance

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” (Ps. 27:14).

“Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him . . .” (Ps. 37:7a).

“But it is for you, O LORD, that I wait . . .” (Ps. 38:15a)

“And now, O LORD, what do I wait for? My hope is in you” (Ps. 39:7).

“I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry” (Ps. 40:1).

“For God alone my soul waits in silence . . .” (Psalm 62:1a, 5a).

“Be still, and know that I am God!” (Psalm 46:10a).

To watch and to wait for God’s guidance is not a passive watching and waiting. It is watching and waiting with *white hot expectation*. It is *leaning into God’s future*. It requires *emptying ourselves* of our own agendas, our own ambitions, our own wills. It is inviting God’s will to be done in and through our lives, as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “. . . thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

To watch and to wait for God’s guidance requires the hard work of *spiritual discernment*. It is acknowledging that our hope is not in ourselves or in any human projects; rather, as the Psalmist sings: “My hope is in you.”

To be obedient to God

Obedience flows from love. At the giving of the Ten Commandments, God promised to show “steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Deuteronomy 5:10). Anyone who is a parent knows that there is a difference between obedience that comes from love and that which comes from fear of consequences. The first flows from a heart of gratitude and a desire to serve; the latter is done with a begrudging spirit. God looks at the heart.

In his *Small Catechism*, Martin Luther offers an explanation to each of the Ten Commandments. Each explanation begins with the phrase, “We are to fear and love God so that . . .” When Luther uses the word “fear,” he is talking about deep and heartfelt reverence and awe. If there is fear in the sense that we use the word, it has to do with our acknowledgement of our insignificance as a mere mortal in the face of the awesome, eternal, creating God of the universe. Our obedience, then, comes from our love of and respect for God.

The Apostle Paul says, “I can do all things through [God] who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). We can do nothing on our own to fulfill the commands of God. It is Christ living within us who fulfills the law. Paul exclaims, “But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18). In Christ, we are free to be joyful and obedient servants of Christ and of one another.

To love God and to love and serve others

Love of God and love of neighbor are core of the law. One of the religious authorities tested Jesus with the question: “*Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?*” He said to him, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*” (Matthew 22:36-40).

Not long before the late Senator Paul Simon died, he spoke at our Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly and challenged all of the churches in the synod to be what he called a “Matthew 25 Congregation.” He was referring to Jesus’ discussion of the separation of the sheep and the goats at judgment:

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

To seek to have the Word dwell in us richly

- “Happy are they . . . [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.” (Psalm 1:1a, 2)
- “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul . . . the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart . . . More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.” (Psalm 19:7a, 8a, 10)
- “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away,

when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign of your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14)
- Simon Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68)
- Jesus Christ himself is the Word, present in the Word proclaimed and the Sacraments administered. When we hear the Word of God, we receive Christ. When we partake in the Lord’s Supper, we receive Christ.
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . .” (Colossians 3:16a)

To practice environmental stewardship

As Christians, called to love God and to love and serve others, it is important that we love and serve all of God's creation. As we worship and glorify God so should we glorify what God has created. In Genesis 1:31 it says that "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good." We are to value those things that are good, therefore, all of creation should be valued. One way of showing that we value creation is by practicing environmental stewardship. Daily we make choices that impact on creation positively and negatively. We learn to be good stewards by following the faith practices. By being intentional about listening for God's guidance we can discern what actions are necessary to insure that God's creation is sustainable. In Proverbs 13:22a we read that "The good leave an inheritance to their children's children." It is imperative that we keep in mind not only the immediate consequences of our choices, but consider the future consequences of our actions. By acting as good stewards of the environment we continue in our covenant with God that was given to humanity through Adam at the beginning of creation, and we remember that we are “blessed to be a blessing.”

For the word of the Lord is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. (Psalm 33:4-5)

To be sent as God’s apostles in all arenas of our lives

Disciples become apostles, at the same time always remaining disciples. Disciples are learners; apostles are those sent out. The noun *apostle* comes from the Greek verb “to be sent.” On the night of the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his bewildered and frightened disciples who were shut behind closed doors and said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). At the end of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus gives his disciples final instructions in what has become known as the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matthew 28:19).

It is an unfortunate reduction of the gospel to think of apostles only in the narrow sense of the original New Testament apostles, or even more broadly as those called overseas as missionaries. A faithful reading of the gospels insists that all Christians are apostles in the sense that we are sent into all arenas of our lives to bear witness to the Good News of the gospel. We bear witness to Christ and the power of his resurrection in all that we say and do, everywhere we are.