

Creating a Congregational Mission Statement

Why prepare a mission statement?

A mission statement will help members focus on who they are as Lutheran Christians — as a gathering of God's people within the community. It will clarify the congregation's mission and renew members' commitment to that mission, and will provide a basis for setting goals, making decisions and planning actions that reflect congregational rather than individual priorities.

Having a mission statement enables you to evaluate and unify the congregation's communications, expressing concisely what the congregation is about and setting goals for spreading the gospel.

Working through the process

This resource suggests a three-step process to arrive at a mission statement:

1. Developing Congregational Identity (understanding who you are).
2. Developing Congregational Mission (stating what you are about).
3. Moving from Mission to Action (preparing to use the statement in planning).

Different ways to use these three steps might be to:

- Work through Part 1 with several groups in the congregation, ask participants to write down their understanding of the congregation's identity, and use these written statements with the Church Council as you move to parts 2 and 3.
- Work through all three parts of the process on a retreat with all congregational leaders, with a goal to complete a working mission statement by the end.
- Check current congregational documents (e.g., your constitution) for previous mission or purpose statements to consider as you formulate your new statement.

Part 1. Developing Congregational Identity: Who are we as God's people in this place?

Our understanding of who you are (identity) will shape what you do (mission). This study will help you clarify your congregational identity from biblical, confessional and situational points of reference.

Biblical

The Bible uses more than 500 nouns and adjectives to describe Christians. Taken together, these words paint a picture of who we are from God's point of view. Review the following references and jot down what each passage says about who we are:

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9, 10
Ephesians 2:11-22
Ephesians 4:4-6
Luke 17:20-21
Romans 3:23-24
1 Corinthians 12:12, 29
Matthew 16:15-18
John 15:5-17

Discuss: What are the implications of each of these passages for your congregation?

Lutheran confessional

How are Lutheran Christians similar to and different from other Christians in what they believe and do?

Review articles V, VII and XIV of the Augsburg Confession, then look at Luther's Small Catechism before reflecting on and discussing the following questions:

- What are the strengths (insights, understandings, gifts) Lutherans can bring to the total witness of Christians in the world?
- How are those strengths (or should those strengths be) at work in your congregation?

Situational

Look closely at your congregation as part of your community. As you do, talk about what part you play in the life and activities of this community. How are you perceived? How do you contribute? How should you be functioning in this community?

To answer those questions effectively, you may want to look at some of the following:

- When and how did you begin as a congregation?
- What are your ethnic roots? How do your roots and your history affect who you are and what you do?
- Where do your people come from? Are they lifelong Lutherans? What other backgrounds do they bring?
- How does your congregation's name signify your life and mission?

Part 2. Developing our congregational mission statement

After summarizing the highlights of your study of your congregational identity, see if you can reach a consensus that brings together the important elements of your understanding.

Review some mission Scripture references. What does each of the following say about your mission?

Mark 10:41-45

Luke 4:18-19

Romans 12:1-21

John 5:6-12

Psalm 99

Matthew 8:1-13

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Mark 10:35-45

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

John 16:12-13

Matthew 11:29

John 13:34-35

Ephesians 4:15-16

Matthew 25:31-46

Mark 6:7

Acts 2:43-47

Luke 10:1

Philippians 1:3-6

After reading the passages and talking about their impact on your congregation's mission, ask members individually to write down words or phrases that express that mission.

- Make a list of those words or phrases that all agree should be a part of the mission statement.
- Write a rough draft of the statement.

You might take time to get input and reaction from others in the congregation. When you meet again, revise and finalize the statement.

Publish your statement in various ways. It might be included in bulletins, distributed on free bookmarks, written attractively and posted in the church narthex, and the like. The statement should become integral to all congregational communications.

Part 3. Moving from mission to action

Your mission statement needs to be a working document that informs council and committee actions. You might use the statement as you:

- **Assess needs.** What needs/hurts/problems is your congregation called upon to address? What action needs to be taken?
- **Identify resources.** What available resources might help you accomplish God's mission through your congregation? Create a wide-ranging list of people, institutions, talents, dollars, partners and the like.
- **Set goals.** What specific, positive, achievable aspects of your congregation's mission do you want to accomplish in the next three years?
- **Develop action plans.** What steps will be needed to accomplish your goals? Who will be responsible for what activities? You might have several action plans for each goal.
- **Evaluate progress and results.** Establish periodic evaluations to measure your progress. What are you learning? What remains to be done? What changes are needed? What new opportunities challenge you? Revise your goals and action plans accordingly.

Where to get additional help

For more help with congregational visioning and planning, consider the [Congregational Leader](#) series from Augsburg Fortress. Titles include:

- *Called to Lead: A Handbook for Lay Leaders*
- *Growing Together, Revised Edition: Spiritual Exercises for Church Committees*
- *Our Context: Exploring Our Congregation and Community*
- *Our Mission: Discovering God's Call to Us*
- *Our Structure: Carrying Out the Vision*