

Zion Lutheran

A People on a Journey to God: Welcoming Jesus and his family

Vision:

We are on a journey together to God.

Goal:

We are becoming an inviting, welcoming, and hospitable people.

Spiritual Issue:

We are going to be praying over the question:

Where is God calling us to be in ministry?

Planning:

To get from where we are now to accomplishing goals and fulfilling our vision we will:

1. Learn about the journey model
2. Learn about the un-churched, who they are and the language they speak
3. We will receive training in being inviting, becoming welcoming, and increasing our listening skills.
4. We will learn how to move out from the comfort of our congregation to be out in the world. **What do the people around us need from us to be drawn into a relationship with God?**

Assumptions behind Being A People on a Journey to God

In the latter part of the 1900's all our assumptions about how our modern culture saw the world began to break down and we began to move into what is called the post-modern age.

This shift from the modern era, which many of us grew up in as the basic assumption of our world understood through the 1950's till today, can best be described by a baseball analogy of four umpires.

The first umpire of the modern era says: "I call them the way they are".

The second umpire of the 1960's says: "I call them as I see them".

The third umpire of the post modern era says; "They ain't anything till I call them what they are".

There is a fourth umpire that is just waiting on the stage to give an opinion in all the chaos of the world that is yet to be identified or named.

For those of us who were raised in the church before the 1960's, we have experienced the breakdown of the relationship between the church and our culture; and we now find ourselves living in what is called a post-modern age which calls upon us to shift the way we will be the church.

So striking is this breaking down of the relationship between our culture and the church that it has broken a relationship between the culture and the church that goes all the way back to Constantine in 317 A.D. We are living through the end of what was known to us as Christendom.

As the church we have been searching for new models and images so we can continue to carry out our purpose to bring the good news of what God has done in Jesus to the world and these are now starting to emerge.

What we have to assume is we are shifting away from old ways of seeing the church and to new ways of being the church:

From:

Maintenance

Membership

Pastor-centered

Chaplaincy (Self)

Focus On Ourselves

Settled

To:

Mission

Discipleship

Lay-Empowerment

Hospitality (Others)

Focus on the World

Sent

What we are going to describe below is how we will move beyond our past model of being the church where we were the passive receivers of God's good gifts being maintained safely in the ship of the church till we all reached the final shores, to a church that forms disciples over time to fully participate in God's mission to the world that is now being described by the name of missional church.

In creating a missional church, we will have to work to redefine our changing roles as we participate in God's mission to the world because we move from being primarily consumers of the churches services to participants in God's mission therefore, missional.

Everyone a Minister (Missionary):

Care of members is not an end in itself, but a "means to an end"- being disciple-forming. (This can be the fulfillment of Luther's vision of the Priesthood of All Believers in our time.)

Trainers: Staff and Leaders:

We are here to empower the missionaries.

Purpose: Mission and Outreach

Members are the frontline missionaries. Once we step outside the church door we are entering the mission field that we all live in.

As we are becoming a missional church at Zion Lutheran Church we will continue to be transformed into a disciple-forming congregation that calls people to participate in God's mission by asking: **What do the people around us need from us to be invited into a relationship with God?**

To that end, we hope to use the model of a journeying people described below:

A People on a Journey to God:

God always seems to act first in love by inviting people to go on a journey with God to a land God will show us.

As Christians we trust God has always acted first in love in Jesus Christ and called us to respond by going on a journey together to God.

Not the way of American Piety which is be good so I can go to heaven.

Not the way of Evangelistic models which asks us to make a decision for Jesus and then strive to become holy.

As we journey to God, over time we journey closer to who we really are in God.

Whenever people join us on the journey, we start with where they are because we assume God has always been a part of their journey.

As Christians we are on a journey to God.

To further this journey we will use our common personal experience and reflection asking: Where is God in this?

Rather than a doctrinal confession approach which asks others to join us and become a member of our church by believing what we believe.

We begin our journey to God by the prompting of the Holy Spirit in us who plants a desire for God within us and we respond by seeking God.

For us as Christians who happen to be Lutheran we see baptism as the sacramental beginning to our journey to God.

As we journey together we will use the Jesus Way.

The Jesus Way is the way of the cross, resurrection, ascension, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. The Jesus Way is not the way of Glory.

We want to invite others to join us on the journey to God and be formed over time as a disciple of Jesus.

We want to find ways to invite people to come and be a part of our community of memory that remembers others who have journeyed to God through the ages.

Here we can use the strength of scriptures and our faith tradition.

We will not strive to be a community of interest.

We are fed on our journey to God over time with the word of God and the meal of bread and wine of Jesus' presence within the community of memory.

As we journey together to God to be formed over time as the disciples of Jesus we will use as a community of memory:

Worship for our formation as a disciple of Jesus in the form of Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending.

Lutheran liturgy and song are filled with images of journey for we have a Liturgical Spirituality.

Catechesis as reflection including the study of scriptures, the six chief parts of Luther's Catechism, and the context of where our faith touches our everyday life as lived experience.

Prayer both as corporate and individual using kataphatic (forms, words, symbols) and apophatic (into silence) prayer forms to more fully bring our attention to God and feed our desire for God.

We are not at our destination yet and like others who have been on the journey before us we are straining ahead and forgetting what is past while we are still moving to God while in God's presence.

While on the journey to God we keep the tension and the paradox of being at the same time both saint and sinner and we live in that creative tension.

Confession and Holy Communion are markers along the journey to God.

As we journey to God we are being transformed into the fullest expression of the mind of Christ as an expression of our truest self.

On the journey to God we have noticed that there are recognizable stages that can be described as we live within a disciple-forming congregation.

As we come back into the community of memory with other fellow travelers who have been on the journey to God in the world. We pause and rest from being the body of Christ in the world (intra-dependent on the Spirit) and move into our Gathering to becoming extra-dependent on God in worship and reflection within the community of memory before we are sent out to be the body of Christ in the world and continue our journey by being intra-dependent on the Spirit again. As people who are on a journey to God we trust this ancient rhythm of gathering, being in God's presence and being sent.

Within the community of memory we are
Strengthening our relationship with God
Being equipped for ministry
Being sent back into the world in mission

Since we have been called out to journey to God we will explore what it means to be called out of living in a world based upon systems of domination and now to be living under the rule of God as King with God's justice as our image of what God's dream is.

To assist us on our journey to God we will explore these practices together over time:

Honoring the body
Hospitality
Household economics
Saying yes and saying no
Keeping Sabbath
Testimony
Discernment
Shaping communities
Forgiveness
Healing
Dying well
Singing our lives

To help hold together our community and enable it to function to fulfill our vision of being a people on a journey to God as a disciple-forming congregation we will use these structures:

Worship
Education
Fellowship
Social Ministry
Evangelism (Witness)
Property
Stewardship of Gifts

To conclude with the words of the fourth umpire who happens to be Lutheran who says: I call balls and strikes as I serve the promise of baseball. Sometimes I get it dead wrong. Sometimes I don't see clearly. And sometimes, when I make my decision, I wonder what I am doing. I never give up my belief in baseball as worthy of my commitment.

Can we say the same about our journey to God that we trust the promise?