

Vision and Purpose

Our vision and purpose can be represented by a tree. We see ourselves growing like a tree with roots, a trunk, branches, and fruit. Our roots are in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are grounded in God's Word and Sacraments, through which God's amazing grace flows and grows all of our ministries and missions.

The primary purpose of all our ministries is to help members of our faith community experience the grace of God flowing through them and producing fruits of the Spirit in their lives. The primary purpose of all our missions is to share this amazing grace of God, through word and deed, with others who have not yet experienced its transforming power in their lives.



We see ourselves growing, not just in numbers, but growing in the Spirit of Christ. We see ourselves growing to serve — just like Jesus, who said in Mark 10:45: ***“I came not to be served, but to serve, and offer my life as a ransom for many.”*** When we offer ourselves in service to others, rather than just seeking to be served, the Spirit of Christ grows in us and through us, producing fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Our vision is rooted in God's word of Scripture: In John 15:5, Jesus says, ***“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”*** We need to continually evaluate each of our missions and ministries with these words in mind and ask ourselves, “Is this or that mission or

ministry fruitful? Is the grace of our Lord Jesus flowing through it? Is it alive with Christ, or has it become dead wood?”

In Galatians 5:16-25, St. Paul writes: *“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other.... ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.”*

We need to examine all of our ministries and missions to see if they are indeed producing fruits of the Spirit. If they are, then let us rejoice and celebrate. But if they are not, then we must ask ourselves, “Why not?” If they are instead producing enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy — “works of the flesh,” then we need to ask ourselves, “Why?”

Each and every one of us must examine our own heart and mind, daily, with the question: “What is at work within me? Is it the Spirit of God or my own sinful flesh?” If we each examine ourselves, we can identify works of the flesh, because we are not yet fully grown; we will not be fully grown until we are eternally abiding in and with Christ.

The way we grow is to identify and confess our sins, receive His forgiveness, and accept that amazing grace into our hearts and minds, where it can produce more fruits of the Spirit. Are we growing, as in the image of the tree? Are we growing in the Spirit of Christ and in service to others? That is our hope and prayer. That is our purpose as a congregation.

