

Vision 2000 – Moving Forward in Mission and Ministry

And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I shall pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
even among the menservants and maidservants
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.
-- Joel 2:28-29

As he concludes his book, *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, 1921 – 1995*, Dan Boice writes the following:

But even as the Church seeks to define her mission, she remains confident in the Lord's presence and promise. How the Church will live out that presence and use that promise will be key to the next twenty-five and seventy-five years. Will new members arrive – and stay – to bring new energy? Will a vision be articulated which will lead the Congregation into new ministries? The time seems ripe for important change and growth.

Change and growth can be scary; however, our congregation, through the Spirit's guidance, continues to ask the question, "What is God's vision for this community of believers called Incarnation?" We have worked hard during these last few months to focus and share our individual visions, seeking common ground to develop a vision that represents all our members. Through prayer, conversation, and study, the Spirit seems to be leading us toward a congregational vision that affirms the statement below:

We, the family of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, are called by God to be a worshiping, learning, witnessing, caring and serving congregation.

Our purposes are:

- *To provide opportunities to receive the Sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion) and to hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the greatest source of strength in our lives as servant people.*
 - *To provide opportunities for all persons to study and share the unique Word of God and to provide programs to help us grow in our faith.*
 - *To reflect God's love for us by caring for each other in times of need and celebrating our blessings together in fellowship.*
 - *To share our faith with all God's children in local, national, and global communities, reaching out to others with love and understanding.*
- We shall strive to serve our Lord by serving His children who are in need through thoughts, words, prayers, and actions that reflect His love for all. This*

congregation shall search for ways to serve and will ask the help of other congregations or organizations to meet the human needs that are beyond our resources, as the Holy Spirit guides and sustains us.

The following pages outline specific goals that support this vision for our congregation. We will strive to be faithful in our pursuit of these goals.

My vision ... our vision ... God's vision. May we continue to be open to God's vision for this faith community called Incarnation.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me save that thou art –
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light. Amen
-- *With One Voice* #776

Numeric Growth

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the day.”

-- Matthew 28: 19 - 20

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

-- Acts 2: 46 - 47

Numeric Growth – Definition and Mission Statement

Numeric growth refers to growth in the average Sunday morning attendance during any three-month period, and the development of skills and programs to achieve a larger attendance and membership. This area includes evangelism efforts; programs which welcome and include new members and visitors; and the attractiveness and usefulness of the facilities.

Our community of faith began in 1921 with 32 charter members and in our 79-year history, we have tried to remain faithful to the Great Commission. We trust the Holy Spirit to continue guiding us as we seek to increase our membership and active participation in this congregation. Our mission is to be the *Evangelical* Lutheran Church of the Incarnation sharing the Good News to all.

With increased growth, it is important that we affirm ourselves as a “program-sized” church (150-350 average Sunday attendance). Our congregation has many of the characteristics of a “program” church, including having an attendance greater than 150, employing multiple staff members, and relying on our members to help carry out our ministry. Many of our members have roots in a “pastoral-sized” church (50-150 average attendance), where the pastor served a central function as the worship leader, teacher, visitor, and administrator. We acknowledge this tension between being a program-sized and pastoral-sized church and the discomfort of moving from one to the other. We will continue to work toward a healthy partnership that effectively uses the spiritual gifts of everyone in our congregation to carry out our ministry, including our clergy, professional staff, and other congregation leaders.

Strengths that Promote Numerical Growth

- We are located on a well-traveled street in a respected neighborhood.
- Our exterior buildings and grounds are attractive and inviting.
- Our Child Development Center and Scouting program are active ministries that can provide connections with unchurched families.
- We offer numerous, meaningful programs that provide multiple opportunities for involvement throughout the life span of our members.
- We warmly receive new members who demonstrate a willingness to be involved.

Congregational Values

- We value spreading God's word to the unchurched.
- We value each and every person as a child of God.
- We value an active membership that is committed to worshiping, learning, witnessing, serving and caring.

Mission and Ministry Goals

In the next five years we will diligently work to –

- **Increase the average Sunday worship attendance of current baptized membership by 30 people.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Worship Committee)

1. Identify members who are not regularly attending worship by using “Who’s Who in the Pew”.
2. Develop a model for contacting inactive members with the goals of re-affirming the congregation’s care and concern for them and inviting them to attend worship and fellowship activities.
3. Assess current worship opportunities and attempt to reduce identified barriers to worship attendance by using feedback from visits.

- **Increase the number of new members who are unchurched or new to the Columbia area by ten households per year.**

Action Plan (Primary responsibility: Evangelism Committee)

1. Obtain the demographics of the area within a one- to three-mile radius of the church regarding age, sex, race, marital status, etc. that can assist the committee in planning programs and connecting with Shandon area residents.
2. Evaluate the current visitor follow-up ministry and change as necessary to make it simpler and more effective.
3. Train and coach greeters as well as the congregation to better welcome visitors.
4. Simplify the Sunday bulletin as necessary to make it easier for visitors to participate in our services.
5. Welcome visitors to each worship service during the announcements.

- **Develop a model for assimilating new members into the congregation.**

Action Plan (Primary responsibility: Parish Life Committee)

1. Identify growing congregations and survey them to determine how they welcome and include new members into the congregation.
2. Assess and modify our Mentoring Ministry where each new household who joins the church is assigned a mentor to guide and support them during their first year of membership.
3. Explore offering an adult catechism program to orient new members (especially the unchurched) into our congregation.
4. Recruit a volunteer coordinator who would help new members choose how they would like to be involved in our congregational life.

- **Promote opportunities for worship, education, service, and fellowship through improved internal and external communication.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Evangelism Committee)

1. Assess the effectiveness of *Contact* in communicating information about on-going and special events in the congregation.
2. Revise the congregational brochure and web site to better communicate opportunities for ministry.
3. Develop a coordinated plan of promoting the congregation through the local media.
4. Assess the effectiveness of outdoor signs in promoting the congregation, making recommendations for improvements.
5. Develop a model for regularly promoting the congregation to Child Development Center parents, Boy Scouts, Happy Wanderers and other external groups that have a connection to the church.
6. Advertise congregation programs and events in a variety of ways – print, oral, electronic, personal contact, etc.
7. Develop a closer relationship with the University of South Carolina Partnership Among Lutherans and Methodists (USC PALM) campus ministry as a way to welcome USC students into our congregation.

- **Make necessary changes to the physical plant (buildings, grounds) that result in a more welcoming facility to visitors and that support the growth of congregational ministries.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Building Renewal Task Force – Master Facilities Plan; Property Committee – Maintenance of Existing Facilities)

1. Forward a copy of Vision 2000 to the architectural consultant to assist with the facilities plan.
2. Ensure that any facilities plan emphasizes handicapped accessibility, an upgraded educational building, a more welcoming narthex, a more comfortable sanctuary, and accessible/useful fellowship space.
3. Develop a plan for better maintenance of the current physical plant.
4. Plan quarterly workdays that involve members (including women and children) in clean up and maintenance tasks.
5. Identify additional recreational/athletic facilities for youth and young adults.

Maturational Growth

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!” - Psalm 122: 1

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. – Acts 2: 42

Maturational Growth – Definition and Mission Statement

Maturational growth is the love and knowledge of God – being shaped in God’s image and conforming to God’s will. It is growth in the fruit of the Spirit. This area includes Christian Education (Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, other classes, etc.) and developing our spiritual gifts. Growing and maturing in this way will help us throughout our life journey.

As a congregation, we have high quality worship services, excellent Christian Education programs, and meaningful fellowship opportunities. Based on responses from our members, there are strong programs already in place for most of our age groups; however, young adults and the elderly are two areas where we could develop more focused ministries. Individually, we need to mature in our stewardship of time, talent and money to provide the necessary program leadership, building facilities, and fiscal support to carry out our ministries.

Strengths that Promote Maturational Growth

- Our worship and music ministry is excellent, blending traditional and more contemporary styles that remain faithful to our Lutheran heritage.
- We offer a quality Christian Education program for members throughout the life span.
- We offer many fellowship opportunities for members.
- We demonstrate Christian love and support for our members in crisis.
- We use our tithes and offerings wisely.

Congregational Values

- We value opportunities for hearing the Word and receiving the Sacraments (Baptism & Holy Communion).
- We value growing in Biblical understanding and spirituality throughout the life span.
- We value connecting with each other in times of joy and times of crises.
- We value teaching the Lutheran faith.

Mission and Ministry Goals

During the next five years we will work diligently to:

- **Develop and implement a stewardship plan that encourages proportionate giving of time, talent, and resources and celebrates growth toward tithing (giving 10 percent) and beyond.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Stewardship Committee)

1. Seek the help of an outside consultant to help the Stewardship Committee assess our stewardship program and to write a five-year plan that includes specific goals.
2. Emphasize time and talent stewardship to support lay leadership needs in our congregation.
3. Incorporate stewardship into the Christian education curriculum for all age groups.
4. Keep the congregation members informed of financial needs in our church.
5. Communicate this stewardship plan to new members of the congregation.

- **Develop a ministry plan to address faith and life issues of those greater than 65 years old within the congregation.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Social Ministry Committee)

1. Create and oversee a “Task Force on Ministry to the Elderly” that represents various age groups and includes members of the Christian Education, Parish Life, and Social Ministry Committees, as well as someone from the pastoral staff.
2. Identify and evaluate current ministries specific to the elderly for their success.
3. Emphasize outreach to homebound members.
4. Identify and prioritize additional ministry needs of the elderly.
5. Implement the resulting plan.
6. Identify and advertise opportunities for intergenerational programs and fellowship.

- **Further develop specific programming for young adults.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Christian Education Committee)

1. Clarify the definition of young adults.
2. Survey young adult membership for input regarding their spiritual needs and recreational interests.
3. Recruit a leadership team to coordinate specific young adult activities.
4. Evaluate program effectiveness on a yearly basis.

Incarnational Growth

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. – Matthew 25: 35 – 36

And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” – Mark 9: 36 – 37

Incarnational Growth – Definition and Mission Statement

Incarnational growth refers to the mission and ministry outside the walls or boundaries of our church. It refers to the way we *incarnate* or live out the love of God in the larger community and in the world.

Individually, members of this congregation are active in many social ministries. As a congregation, we have visible outreach to the community through the Child Development Center and other programs. We can be more successful in our social ministry by identifying community needs, focusing our congregational outreach to targeted ministries, and encouraging even more of our membership to participate in these targeted ministries.

Strengths that Promote Incarnational Growth

- Individually, many of our members are involved in a variety of social ministry activities.
- We have a strong Child Development Center and a strong Boy Scout program.
- We have a generous spirit of financial support for various outreach ministries.

Congregational Values

- We value sharing the Gospel through service and outreach to others.
- We value individual participation in social ministries.
- We value having our congregation identified with specific social ministries.

Mission and Ministry Goals

During the next five years we will work diligently to:

- **Incorporate the use of 3000 Devine Street into an intentional outreach ministry.**
Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Property Ministry Task Force)
 1. Obtain a “community needs assessment” from a social service agency such as the United Way.
 2. Identify a particular outreach ministry based on the community needs assessment and congregational input.
 3. Visit/Consult with other churches who are doing similar ministry.
 4. Develop a plan for making the ministry a reality.
 5. Modify 3000 Devine Street property as necessary to house the ministry.

- **Each year, highlight one social ministry opportunity that our congregation will promote and support at a congregational level.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Social Ministry Committee)

1. From the many social ministries in which individual members currently participate, identify a ministry that will be targeted during the upcoming year, e.g. Harvest Hope Food Bank, Cooperative Ministry, Lutheran World Relief, etc.
2. During the year, sponsor several projects for the targeted ministry that involves the congregation and increases the number of members participating in social ministry activities.
3. Collect special offerings throughout the year for the targeted ministry.
4. Promote the agency and congregational involvement through *Contact*, Temple Talks, and direct mail.

- **Earn national certification for our Child Development Center from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Child Development Center Committee)

1. Obtain national certification guidelines.
2. Assess the current Child Development Center program, staff, and facilities, using certification guidelines as a benchmark.
3. Communicate facility/building requirements to the Building Renewal Task Force.
4. Develop and monitor a written plan for moving toward certification.
5. Be available to help other churches and organizations that are developing their own child development programs.

Organic Growth

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. – 1st Corinthians 12: 4 – 7

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. – John 13: 34

Organic Growth – Definition and Mission Statement

Organic growth refers to the organization of the church and the mood or culture of the church community. The focus is on how members feel about each other, the congregational leadership, and the way ministries are carried out.

The Holy Spirit has brought us to this faith community called Incarnation. We are called to live in community with respect and love for each other, using the gifts given to each and every one of us by the Spirit. This is not always an easy task. Meaningful ministry requires that we be willing to share our spiritual gifts in the church; that we be consistently faithful in our work; that we communicate well with each other; and that we keep a positive attitude even when we are frustrated with ourselves and others.

Strengths that Promote Organic Growth

- We have a strong sense of community where members genuinely care about each other.
- Our Incarnation Development Foundation and the Congregation Council cooperate to support effective congregational ministry.
- We have many opportunities for fellowship with each other.
- We have a gifted staff.

Congregational Values

- We value our Christian community that emphasizes care and concern for each other.
- We value participation by everyone in the life of the congregation.
- We value cooperation of our members and leaders to achieve our ministry goals.
- We value an organization where systems run smoothly.
- We value making decisions based on what we believe God wants for our church.
- We value strong leadership from our clergy and lay leaders.

Mission and Ministry Goals

During the next five years we will work diligently to:

- **Develop a system of accountability for the standing committees, the Congregation Council, and the staff.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Congregation Council Executive Committee)

1. Develop a formal orientation program for new Congregation Council members.
2. Develop a formal orientation program for new committee members/chairs.
3. Develop a formal transition process from exiting committee chairs to new committee chairs.
4. Ensure that each standing committee meets on a regular basis.
5. Reaffirm accountability of each Congregation Council member at annual Council retreat.
6. Ensure that each committee and each staff member develops annual objectives and action plans that are specific, measurable, realistic, time-based, and consistent with the Vision 2000 document.
7. Review, evaluate, and update objectives annually.
8. Ensure that the Pastor and the Associate in Ministry each have an active Mutual Ministry Committee that serves to listen to the staff members' concerns, to provide meaningful support, and to encourage better communication between the staff members and the congregation.

- **Develop improved methods of communication among staff, elected leaders, committee membership, and the congregation.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Congregation Council)

1. Continue using *Contact*, church web site, Sunday bulletins, Temple Talks, fliers, and posters.
2. Promptly outline highlights from Congregation Council meetings in *Contact*.
3. Promptly file minutes of Congregation Council meetings in the binder located in the hallway behind the Reception Hall.
4. Publish a reminder in *Contact* at least quarterly where Congregation Council minutes can be found.
5. List committee chairs in the annual directory, in *Contact*, and on the church web site.
6. Keep an updated copy of the church calendar in a public place.
7. Develop an effective system for committees to report regularly their activities to the Congregation Council.
8. Develop and use technology tools to serve the ministries of the congregation.

- **Develop stronger congregational leaders through focused leadership training.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Congregation Council)

1. Plan an annual Leadership Retreat that includes the Congregational Council, committee chairs, the Pastor, and Associate in Ministry, emphasizing leadership skills such as: goal setting, planning, project management, delegation, and community building.
2. Plan and implement a program designed to develop new congregational leaders emphasizing Lutheran theology and leadership basics that includes a group service project.
3. Include leadership education in youth programming, including leadership skills and participation in synod leadership events.
4. Clarify leadership roles of the Pastor, Associate in Ministry, and elected/appointed lay leaders.

- **Examine and refine the function and structure of the standing committees, the Congregation Council, and the staff from the perspective of the Vision 2000 document.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Congregation Council)

1. Review and make necessary revisions to committee functions and structure as currently stated in the congregational by-laws.
2. Review job descriptions and/or call documents for each staff member making revisions as necessary.
3. Develop a handbook for each standing committee that includes overall committee purpose, position descriptions for its members, operating procedures, and accountability guidelines.
4. Explore updating the term “committee” to something more current, e.g., “Ministry Team for Evangelism.”
5. Meet annually to formally review, evaluate, and update the Vision 2000 document.

- **Add a Volunteer Coordinator to the staff who can assist members in becoming more involved in the life of the congregation.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Congregation Council Executive Committee)

1. Identify other churches that have Volunteer Coordinators and consult with their staffs about how to best utilize a Volunteer Coordinator.
2. Purchase resources from organizations such as Alban Institute that focus on successful strategies for adding a Volunteer Coordinator.
3. Develop a position description that includes responsibilities and required skills.
4. Decide if the position will be incorporated into existing staff responsibilities, who will supervise the position, and whether the position will be paid or non-paid.
5. Develop specific measurable goals for increasing participation of members in activities of the congregation.
6. Develop a better system for assessing congregational time and talent resources and for communicating those resources to the congregational leadership.
7. Work with new and inactive members to get them more involved with activities and opportunities provided by the congregation.
8. Develop ways of supporting and thanking those who volunteer for church activities.

- **Continue to provide quality fellowship opportunities that promote a sense of belonging and connection to the congregation and boost congregational morale.**

Action Plan (Primary Responsibility: Parish Life Committee)

1. Evaluate existing fellowship opportunities to determine if they should be continued, changed, or discontinued.
2. Strive for greater intergenerational participation in fellowship opportunities.
3. Seek information from the congregation about what fellowship opportunities they would like to see added.
4. Effectively publicize fellowship opportunities to promote participation.
5. Investigate possibilities for ministries directed to single and single-again population.