

**Mission and Vision Statement**  
**Faith Lutheran Church of McLean County**  
**October 16, 2018**

**Our Mission**

**Growing disciples who grow disciples**

*Then Jesus came to them and said..."Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:18-20*

**Our Vision**

**Planting churches that grow disciples who plant churches**

*They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Acts 14:21-23*

**What we mean when we say "planting new churches".**

We believe that God's vision for Faith is the same as it was for the first century church – to plant churches that grow disciples who plant churches. Our aim is to identify a small town in McLean County that is lacking a vibrant faith community (Romans 15:20) and plant a new church there within the next 2 years.

We further believe that He is calling us to plant 3 new churches in the next 5 years.

to plant 10 new churches in 10 years.

to plant 100 new churches in 20 years.

to plant 1000 new churches in 40 years.

The churches we will be planting will be different than what we traditionally think of as church. We tend to envision a modern version of Christendom rooted in our experiences with the institutional church of the 1950s, a more contemporary (but still institutional) church of the 1980s, or the *post-modern* version of the 2000s. While our Christian theology does not change, our structures, systems, and leadership need to change in order to be relevant and effective so that we can make disciples today and into the future.

The new churches we will be planting will not be like Faith Lutheran Church with their own constitution, council, website, etc. Instead, they might be better described as "faith communities" or "micro-churches" or "ministry initiatives". They will have simple leadership structures and may meet in coffee houses or even in people's homes. They might be born out of small groups that eventually grow large enough to support their own worship service (but not necessarily with their own pastor). They might serve as satellite campuses to Faith Lutheran. In time, some of these churches might, in fact, transform into churches that do function like Faith, with their own constitution, council, website, etc. The process and effort required to birth one of these new churches will not be the same as what we went through to birth Faith Lutheran Church.

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**What is happening with traditional churches in rural communities that compels us to plant new churches there.**

- In 2000, the ELCA had almost 6 million members; today the official membership is 3.2 million with an annual decline of 200,000 to 300,000 members per year over the past 10-15 years.
- The Hartford Institute for Religion Research finds that according to current trends “in the next 20 years, you’ll have half as many open congregations as now.”
- A record 1 in 5 Americans now reports no religious affiliation.
- The median age of worshippers in church on Sunday is older than 50 for all mainline Protestant denominations, according to the Pew Research Center.
- An ELCA Bishop recently stated that his primary focus is on “hospice care” for dying churches in his Illinois Synod. Many of these churches are in rural areas where the church has traditionally been the backbone of small communities.

There are some Evangelical churches in our area that are thriving and growing; however, even among these churches, only a few are focused on planting churches like the early Church of the New Testament. Those who are planting churches are focused on larger communities. In fact, the vast majority of growing, thriving churches in America today that are engaged in church planting (primarily through multi-site or satellite campus) are heavily focused on large metropolitan areas or college towns. Across the United States, there are only a handful of churches that are doing church planting in small, rural communities. There is a need in these communities that is not being filled and we believe God is calling us to rural ministry.

**Our Convictions**

**As we live into this vision to which God is calling us, we will more closely resemble the first century church as described in Acts 2:42-47.**

*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

**Jesus is the only real and lasting hope for the world.**

We believe that as the world is broken, only Jesus can heal and restore us. For this reason, we don't apologize for the Gospel or for putting our relationship with Him first in our lives. We strive to respond faithfully to the call of Jesus to follow him above all else in this world, which so often competes for our time, energy and attention. (John 3:16-21)

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**Following Jesus (Discipleship) is a Growing Experience.**

We believe that every Partner of Faith Lutheran Church should be growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ and not just someone who “goes to church”. (James 1:22-25) A disciple is someone who has committed his or her life completely to Jesus by:

- Connecting to God through worship, prayer, and Bible study
- Growing spiritually and sharing his or her life authentically through small groups
- Serving in the church and the community with the goal of making Christ known to others
- Giving generously to support the mission and ministries of the church
- Investing in the spiritual growth of others so that they can become disciples of Jesus

**Lost people matter to God, so they matter to us.**

We recognize that there is an urgent need for Jesus in the world and that there are many who are wandering without the Savior. We believe the Church is God’s strategy to reach those far from Jesus. We seek and create opportunities to interact with others, invest in them, and point them to Jesus. (Luke 15:1-32)

We believe this is the true purpose of every follower of Jesus and it is the purpose of Faith Lutheran Church. We want to share the gospel with all people (churched and unchurched), because we know the difference Jesus can make in their lives. (John 1:35-45)

**Jesus transforms lives and communities.**

We believe the gospel is the means by which non-believers come to salvation and is also the means by which believers acknowledge and address their flaws and problems and grow into Christ’s likeness. The gospel changes us from the inside out, frees us from both self-righteousness and self-condemnation, and enables us to welcome all people, including those who don’t share our beliefs. (Romans 12:1-3)

As the gospel changes our hearts, it makes us into people who can form far more transparent, honest, intimate, and loving relationships with others. This transformation helps us deepen friendships, improve marriages, and strengthen families. (John 15:9-17)

The gospel also affects our public life, particularly how we pursue our vocations in the world and do our daily work. Living our faith through our work and service in the community changes and renews those around us, ultimately changing the culture in which we live. (1 Peter 2:4-12)

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**We worship God with our whole lives.**

Worship is central to our community life together. We strive to share the Gospel of Jesus in authentic and meaningful ways as we help worshipers honor, glorify and express their love to God. (Romans 12:1)

We worship God, not human tradition. Where tradition helps to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and further the mission of our church, we will embrace it. Where tradition becomes a wall between God and His people, we will tear it down. We believe in the unchanging Gospel message of Jesus Christ; however, as the world continues to change, our methods must also change so that the Gospel is effectively communicated. (Matthew 12:1-8)

We welcome the non-believing members of our community to worship, and seek to minimize the use of language that may be confusing. We strive to be a community where doubters feel their questions are taken seriously and to be mindful of what it is like for those who do not yet believe. We want all Christians who come into Faith Lutheran Church to think, "I wish my non-Christian friend could hear this." (Romans 14:1-19)

We seek to create a family atmosphere where all feel welcome. (Galatians 3:25-29)

**We are blessed and we will be a blessing to others.**

We believe the gospel lifts up the poor and broken, giving them a new identity and confidence in Christ. Pouring our lives out in deeds of mercy is a sign that our hearts have been changed by God's grace. We want to be generous in sharing our wealth, talents, and time to help people meet their immediate needs as well as improve their quality of life for the long term. We work to offer abundant mercy and grace. We hope that outsiders will then be more inclined to follow as we point to Jesus. (Micah 6:8)