

**Vision Plan 2022-2023**  
September 6, 2022

**INTRODUCTION**

Grace has aimed to be on a cycle of visioning for two-year periods. We were due to start a cycle in 2020 as our most recent goals were for 2019-2020. However, the pandemic caused that cycle to be put on hold.

As a result of attending the workshop by Pastor Mike Ward in January 2021, it became evident that Grace should do visioning in line with the emphasis on Sharing our Abundance proposed by Pastor Ward and adopted by Stewarding Commission. We explored the approach espoused by Pr. Ward for visioning. He urges the adoption of goals phrased so as to give a vision of what will be achieved by pursuing them and, very importantly, to be inspiring.

**WORKSHOP: PR. PATTI AXEL**

We invited Pr. Patti Axel, assistant to the Bishop of the SE Synod, to lead the Vision Team and Church Council in a mini-workshop to help us understand how best to involve the congregation and get buy-in from as many of our folks as possible. We met on Zoom on April 9 and 10 of 2021. Pr. Patti presented thoughts on visioning. She helped us start the consideration of revising our Mission and Vision Statements. She also led the group in an exercise in dreaming and suggested that that be a part of our visioning process for all who are involved.

Pastor Patti also strongly encouraged that Grace embark on a program called “Unbinding Your Hearts,” a six-week time of Bible study and learning varied approaches to prayer with a prayer partner. The Church Council did that in fall of 2021. Commissions will begin in early 2022.

**VISIONING SMALL GROUP MEETINGS AND SURVEY: WHO ARE WE NOW?**

Many Grace folks participated in our recent Visioning exercise through small group Zoom meetings and others through an online survey or hard copy mailed to them. At the outset, the content for consideration was the same. The results have been tallied and are summarized here.

**Core Values**

Our top Core Values at present were identified by the participants as:

- 40 votes: Service to the needy locally and beyond; social justice
- 28 votes: Christian education for all/faith formation/spiritual development
- 28 votes: Welcome each person as an individual made in Christ’s image
- 27 votes: Care for those in the congregation
- 23 votes: Rich, dynamic worship

The remaining votes were as follows:

12 votes: Outreach to the unchurched and formerly churched

10 votes: Youth programs

7 votes: Open discussion leading to consensus

2 votes: Religious arts and crafts, creativity

Several people expressed hopes that our future top values would include more focus on youth and youth programs, and also outreach to the unchurched/formerly churched.

### **Mission Statement**

A mission statement should be short and easy to remember and internalize. It's a statement of our reason for being.

With regard to the Mission Statement choices, four people preferred to stay with the present statement, "To love Jesus and help others love Him too." Another 11 preferred the version: "To love Jesus and help others love Him through worship, education, and service," while 5 preferred the version "To love Jesus and help others love Him through word and deed," and 6 preferred "To love Jesus and help others love Him through word and actions." Some expressed no preference. However, not all groups realized they could vote for the present wording and additional wordings evolved during the course of the small group sessions.

Since not everyone was presented with all the choices at every small group meeting due to the evolution of the wording from meeting to meeting, and the close number of votes if the last two were combined, the Vision Team sent an online survey to the entire congregation. It included the original wording plus the other three given above.

The results were:

15 - Original wording: "To love Jesus and help others love Him too"

7 - "To love Jesus and help others love Him through worship, education, and service"

6 - "To love Jesus and help others love Him through word and deed"

12 - "To love Jesus and help others love Him through word and actions"

The results of this survey were not fully tallied because we used a free version of Survey Monkey, not knowing it only will report the results of 40 votes or less while we had 45 votes total. By far the most votes went to those versions other than the current one.

A second online survey was conducted using Google Forms. It offered the original wording versus "To love Jesus and help others love Him through word and actions." The results were essentially a tie.

The Vision Team concludes that, taking both surveys together, by far the most votes were for versions other than the original or current one. In addition, it was felt that the statement should contain wording indicating actions both within and outside our congregation.

Therefore, The Vision Team thus recommends the adoption of: *“To love Jesus and help others love Him through word and actions.”*

### **Vision Statement**

A vision statement should likewise be short and easy to remember. It should describe how the world will look when the group lives out its mission statement. Our current Vision Statement is much too long to remember.

The Vision Statement preference was rather close; 23 preferred “We share God’s love and grace to meet the needs of a diverse community.” The second choice was “We share God’s abundant love to meet the needs of a diverse community,” with 19 votes.

The Vision team recommends adoption of *“We share God’s love and grace to meet the needs of a diverse community.”*

### **Dreaming Big**

All were invited to describe a big bold dream or vision for the future of Grace, assuming money and resources of all kinds were no object. A striking number of participants want to see Grace grow into a more diverse congregation in all respects, *but with special emphasis on families with children and youth. In keeping with that, they want Grace to again have a vibrant, active program for children and youth.* How could we move towards that? We’d need all hands on deck to pursue this dream.

Strikingly similar hopes for more families with youth and children and a vibrant youth program were also expressed strongly in the previous visioning efforts that resulted in the 2005 Vision Plan and the 2015 Vision Report.

The Vision Team and Nurturing Commission met on February 2, 2022, to discuss how to move forward intentionally to pursue the dreams expressed around drawing in more families with children and youth and to enhance the programs for children and youth. The Nurturing Commission came up with additional goals for immediate pursuit. These are incorporated into the goals for 2022-2023 and an appendix with details. A major goal is to lay the foundation for adding a paid part-time youth leader or alternately, a seminary intern whose primary responsibilities would be to work with children and youth and support the volunteer involved with those programs.

Nurturing, Proclaiming, and the Vision Team will look for ways to challenge the congregation to actively support these efforts.

## COMMISSION GOALS FOR 2022-2023

### Administering:

Goal: Provide and maintain facilities and infrastructure to support the mission and programs of the congregation.

#### Tactics:

- Provide equipment to enable high quality streaming video for services in the sanctuary and fellowship hall to serve those unable to attend in person and to spread the word. (DONE)
- Provide a reliable secure computer system for maintaining church records and effectively communicating with the congregation.
- Determine the best use of the rental house to support the congregation's ministry to the community. (IN PROGRESS)
- Upgrade the educational space to provide a functional inviting space that encourages participation of youth and adults, once needs are determined.

#### Summary of progress toward 2019-2020 goals:

The 2019-2020 goal was: Develop a proposal for potential major capital upgrades to the facilities for consideration when the current mortgage is complete in February 2020.

Result: A draft proposal was developed but is on hold due to the pandemic.

### Nurturing:

Goal 1: To provide our youth and children with a foundation in the faith that will sustain them throughout their lives.

#### Tactics:

- We will lay the groundwork for pursuing addition of a paid part-time youth leader.
- We will talk directly with all our parents to find out what they want and will support in a program for their children and youth.
- We will provide educational opportunities for all ages (four-year-olds to adult).
- We will provide our youth with fellowship opportunities. We will support them with a mentoring program.
- We will have some fun activities in the summer for our kids/youth.
- We will may try one-day VBS-like sessions on Saturday or Sundays.
- Encourage Worshipping to start a little children's choir for 3-4-5-6-year olds.
- We will encourage Worshipping to restart early communion classes and have first communion on Maundy Thursdays.
- We will look for volunteer coordinators for the youth group and get it going once pandemic allows. Even if we get a paid person, volunteers are needed to help with activities. Try to get some of our younger adults involved, especially those with no kids in youth group.
- We will offer fun activities for kids in Woodland area, especially around Grace.

- We will do a needs assessment in Woodland: assess need for after school care/program; for summer activities; for other fun activities. What do parents want for their kids? Need Spanish language as well as English survey or conversations.
- We will involve our older youth: some need service project credits. Might help with little kids' choir, with VBS.
- We will require all those who work with elderly or children to complete the online "safe gathering" program. We will provide parents with a copy of the child safety policy.

Goal 2: To foster meaningful relationships among congregation members by providing a variety of fellowship opportunities.

Tactics:

- We will provide six fellowship opportunities for the congregation which will include: a picnic at Frozen Head, a Women's tea, a congregational picnic, a Thanksgiving Dinner, and special Christmas activities.
- We will support various other groups and activities.

Goal 3: To foster a sense of being cared for in congregation members.

Tactics:

- We will address the needs of the congregation through our Stephen Ministry program. We will provide training for those members who want to become Stephen Ministers.

Summary of progress toward 2019-2020 goals:

We will commit to 5-6 fellowship events for the year 2019. These will include:

- April- picnic at Frozen Head
- May- women's tea  
Pentecost – Confirmation dinner
- August- Sunday school picnic
- November- Thanksgiving dinner
- December – Caroling party

This was accomplished in 2019 and partially in 2020-21 with outdoor activities only.

We will continue to provide Christian education classes for people of all ages (preschool through adult).

This was accomplished until the pandemic of 2020 caused classes to be put on hold and worship services to go online. Classes went back to in person in fall of

2021 but as of January 9, 2022, they were again put on hold due to the Omicron surge of the pandemic.

To ensure the safety of our children, we will be sure that all teachers and youth workers take the safe gathering online classes. This was accomplished.

We will continue to support the Stephen Ministry in any way that is needed.

This was accomplished with four more Stephen Ministers trained and commissioned on July 18, 2021.

### **Proclaiming:**

Goal: We will be a Great Commission Church as we share our Grace-based faith by equipping our members for sharing their faith, developing relationships in small groups, and also in one-on-one encounters.

### Tactics:

- We will continue Alpha, if necessary on line, and in person when pandemic conditions allow, if we have enough participant interest.
- We will resume our hospitality activities as conditions allow.
- We will ensure that the communications TV screens get updated.
- We will look for new ways to get Grace better known in the community.
- We will work to reactivate our small groups and expand if possible.
- We will continue to support our Ministry to the International Community and foster more interaction of students with the congregation.

### Summary of progress toward 2019-2020 goals:

- Continue Alpha. This was accomplished. Alpha courses were offered in winter (January-April) of 2019 and 2020. The 2020 course changed to online in March. No course was offered in 2021. A Winter 2022 Alpha course is being offered.
- Explore becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation (welcoming LGBTQ individuals). This exploration was begun but is on hold.
- Continue hospitality activities. This was accomplished until the pandemic change to streaming worship and online meetings. We still send a welcome note to first-time visitors and a Visitor Report to Council and many other active members. We continue to encourage the congregation to be actively welcoming.
- Complete the Digital Communications activity and system for keeping updated. This was accomplished; monitors were installed and initially updated by volunteers; subsequently they were shut down from March 2020 through August 2021. The church secretary is currently updating the slides with guidance from Proclaiming.

- Explore more ways to become known in community (Twitter, Instagram, etc.). This was accomplished with the addition of both Twitter and Instagram accounts by the Social Media Team.
- Continue to support adding more Small Groups. This was accomplished; a new online Book Discussion Group grew out of the 2020 Winter Alpha. Groups that are on hold due to the pandemic will need to be restarted as conditions allow. Grace's Greatest has continued and will meet outdoors as weather permits in spring 2022. Grace Writers and Poetry Pie continue online.
- Continue supporting Ministry to Internationals. This was accomplished; our classes went online from March 2020 – June 2021 but have gone back to in person while complying with guidance from the Reopening Task Force; a temporary switch to online or on hold has begun on January 6 due to the Omicron variant surge. A new M-Tu-W-Th a.m. beginner class was added at the end of August 2021 thanks to a new volunteer, Eunice Search.
- Our Russian OLSE class has continued online initially with two, then one of our Russian ESOL students teaching. French ended with the March 2020 shutdown; Spanish is on hold; it will start again if a new instructor can be found and if there's enough interest.

### **Serving:**

Goal: We will endeavor to follow God's command to serve our neighbors through Grace church, community ecumenical groups, and church-wide efforts.

### Tactics:

Grace will:

- Improve community awareness of our Food Pantry through outreach
- Provide information about other community resources to our food pantry clients
- Continue to support the Holiday Basket and Angel Tree ministries
- Work with the new Community Garden task force
- Be a good neighbor to Woodland School
- Show appreciation of volunteers and avoid volunteer fatigue

Community Ecumenical efforts

- Continue to support the important work of the Ecumenical Storehouse, especially with volunteers
- Be open to other local ecumenical efforts

Church wide missions

- Support and encourage the Blanket Workshop
- Continue to sell fair trade products to support the Lutheran World Relief Equal Exchange Project

Avoid mission creep

Summary of progress toward 2019-2020 goals:

- The Food Pantry, because of committed volunteers, has continued to serve the local community even during the pandemic, by changing to a drive-by mode. The number of clients served did decline during that period, possibly due to other sources of available help. Fresh vegetables have not routinely been available to clients. The food pantry is currently in good financial shape, thanks to contributions from Grace members and the local community.
- The Holiday Basket distribution has gone smoothly based on good communication with the Family Resource Center and the clients. Except for Easter 2020, the holiday baskets continued to be distributed during the pandemic.
- The Angel Tree Ministry continues to thrive.

Dedicated volunteers make these missions possible.

The Mental Health Ministry and the Veteran Task Forces are currently inactive.

**Stewarding:**

Goal: The Stewarding Commission fosters the culture of abundance by effectively bringing forth each member's skills, knowledge, time, and treasure.

Tactics:

- Discipleship Opportunities  
Abundance stories (like sharing God and Me stories)  
3-ring binder for Discipleship Opportunities information
- Work to bring about changing the name of Stewarding to "Sharing Abundance Commission."
- Change the terminology used for what has been the Operating Budget to the "Ministry Fund."

Summary of progress toward 2019-2020 goals:

The Stewarding Commission conducted the Stewardship Drive in 2020 and supported the Budget Task Force in preparing a proposed Budget for 2021.

Its goal for 2019-2020 was to be the Commission to which a Green Team would report. The Green Team did not get fully operational, in part due to the pandemic.

**Worshipping:**

Goal: Grace will offer a choice of creative, engaging services full of music and other arts, praising and worshipping God, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, incorporating the sacraments, and welcoming diverse worshippers, especially children. The services will be both in person and live streamed.



### Tactics:

- Coordinate with COVID Reopening Task Force to ensure safe worship practices.
- Include children and youth in worship services where possible.
- Make worship services lively and meaningful through music, prayer, and other worshipping activities.
- Incorporate drama in services several times per year. Include children and youth in at least some of these activities.
- Make worship inclusive by incorporating into our schedule of lectors, liturgists, Altar Guild, ushers and greeters all who have indicated an interest in participating.
- Set tone for worship and for hospitality and welcoming through appropriate decoration of Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall and Narthex and Entrance.
- Consider adding special activities or services from time to time. Possibilities include Compline, Taize, and including additional musical offerings, such as guest musicians.
- Look for ways to strengthen relationships between our Contemporary and Traditional Services.
- Continue working to improve live streaming, along with incorporating TVs into the Contemporary worship service.
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### Summary of progress toward 2019 -2020 goals:

#### New Goals For 2019

1. Work with Council Task Force, being named in late 2018, to develop events for “Safety and Emergency Awareness” and for “Hospitality and Welcoming Actions” for all ushers and greeters. ON HOLD
2. Work towards featuring a combined piece of music for Ringspiration and the Chancel Choir in the last quarter of 2019. ON HOLD

#### Continuing Goals – 2019

1. The Flower Guild plans to have a Flower Fest event the first weekend of May 2019. Will invite area garden clubs to participate in various activities, such as a plant exchange, education opportunities, other potential activities, and a musical event on Sunday afternoon. This has been very well received in the community and at Grace. DONE (2019); ON HOLD subsequently
2. Continue to enhance worship services by identifying and encouraging members with musical gifts to lead selected hymns and/or praise music. CONTINUING
3. Consider special activities/services, such as Taize, a labyrinth, inviting a praise band from another church to perform at a midweek service, and dramatic presentations. CONTINUING: Premiered original Reformation Day play/musical on October 31, 2021.

Develop intergenerational skits for various services as a sermon; support First Harmony youth choir in developing skits for presentation at special Sunday combined worship services during the year, by including money for these activities in the proposed budget for 2019.

CONTINUING: Skits may not necessarily replace sermons.