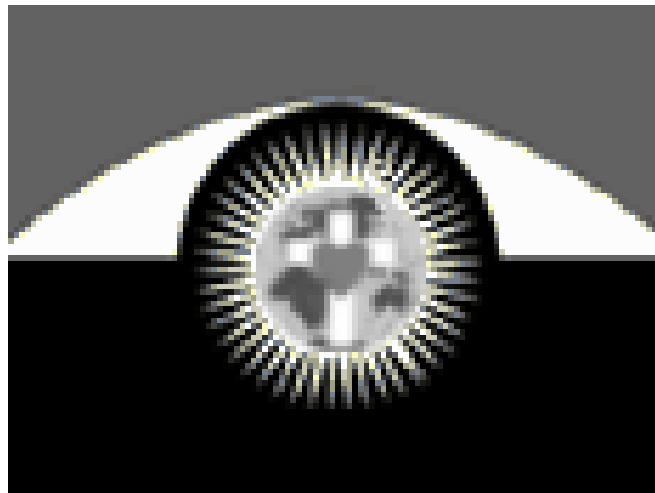


**St. James
Lutheran Church
Limerick, PA**

**Building on God's
Vision**



**Five Year
Proposal**

**Approved by Congregational Vote
June 6, 2004**

“Where there is no vision, the people perish!” (Prov 29:18)

One of the most powerful questions we can ever ask is, “God, what do you desire of me?” If we faithfully wrestle with the answers to that question, either individually or as a faith community, we will never be the same. We know this from the experience of asking this question in 1998 through a visioning process in which God richly blessed this congregation. Below is a list of some of the blessings that were added or occurred in the five years that followed:

- Contemporary service
- Small groups
- Air conditioned building & paid off the fellowship hall
- His Kids Christian Preschool
- Doubled benevolence
- Kids Kingdom
- Grew in discipleship, ministries, finances and worship and Sunday School attendance
- Reached out to congregation and community
- Multimedia in worship
- Supported and inspired other congregations
- Added full time Director of Discipling & Director of Children and Youth Ministries
- Miracle Sunday which added parking

Built on this first venture, church council approved a second visioning process in 2003 and nominated our team. It is then with joy and an incredible sense of expectation that we offer this second five year vision to the congregation! Within these pages you will find many of the dreams that have been discerned by surveys, meetings with numerous groups at St. James, prayer and reflection on scripture, meetings with community leaders, readings from respected church leaders and study of healthy congregations and study of local demographics. But most of all you will read some of what we have felt God speaking to us! What you will not find but we also expect is that God will do even more with us than we could even dream about!

Literally hundreds and hundreds of hours of work, study, prayer, meetings and faith have gone into creating this and we believe it has been time well spent seeking God’s will for our community.

At the Church Council meeting on May 11th council leaders unanimously approved this vision, also believing that it is biblically based and God inspired. We hope as you read this vision that you also find it faithful and more importantly, that you see ways you can contribute to this grand vision!

In Christ,
The Visioning Team

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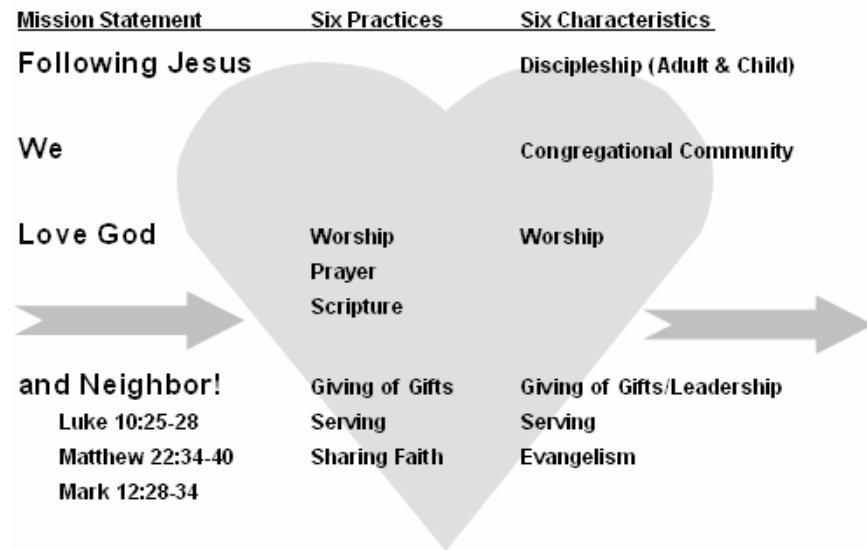
Our Mission, Practices and Characteristics

The life of a Christian can be summarized into two simple words with profound meaning: Following Jesus. To live your life as a disciple, trying to let Jesus lead and guide your life, to be like him in all aspects of your actions and character is a worthy goal for every person. Furthermore, a casual or in-depth reading of the life of Jesus will reveal that there are two things that were most important to Jesus. When a learned man asked Jesus how to receive eternal life (Lk 10:25f), Jesus clearly described these two things: love God and neighbor. This then is the very core, the mission which guides everything at St. James:

Following Jesus, We Love God and Neighbor!

Building on our mission statement we also emphasize six faith practices that help us grow as followers of Jesus and six characteristics which every church needs to have as basic building blocks. Below you will see how each of those practices and characteristics flows from our mission. In the pages that follow you will find our strategic mission for the next five years, which will guide us to help live out our mission, based on the characteristics!

St. James Lutheran Church Model



Discipleship: Children and Youth

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." And he laid his hands on them and went on his way. (Matthew 19:14, 15)

It is the center of our mission that every person at St. James will grow as a follower of Jesus Christ, especially our younger members. We do this by building relationships with them, supporting them and loving them so that they come to know how precious they are in God's eyes. We do this in acknowledgement that they are not only the disciples of the future, but they are disciples now.

1. Develop a children's ministry, in conjunction with or separate from Kids Kingdom, designed for grade school age children.
2. Develop additional resources, provide support and offer ongoing training for Sunday School teachers and children's ministry leaders to better empower them, while continually striving to provide Christian education in a creative, fun and meaningful way.
3. Develop separate youth ministries for Junior and Senior High.
4. Create a ministry to college students so they feel in contact while away and schedule events while they are home.
5. Hold parenting classes and/or small groups, apart from or in conjunction with youth or children activities.
6. Recognize high school and college graduates each year.
7. Videotape Kids Kingdom and make it available on the web, on PCTV, or to be used as a tool for evangelism.
8. Create mission trips which involve youth and adults serving together.
9. Have more youth-led worship services and involve more youth in worship.
10. Have more youth activities with other churches.
11. As renovations are done, develop more space especially for youth.
12. Expand His Kids Christian Preschool to include a pre-kindergarten program and possibly a day care program.
13. Develop after-school programs or summer programs to help children thrive academically, spiritually, and socially.
14. Develop a budget item for bus rental expenses for children's and youth ministries.
15. Encourage children to attend a Christian Summer Camp program.

Discipleship: Adults

Then Jesus said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."²⁴ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.²⁵ What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? (Luke 9:23-25)

It is the center of our mission that every person at St. James will grow as a follower of Jesus Christ, emphasizing adults, for all of us should strive to go deeper as disciples. This especially happens through growth in one's prayer life and knowledge and application of scripture, as well as through the other characteristics found in this Vision Plan.

1. Continue to develop, encourage and advertise small groups (both long term and short term) and adult growth-in-faith opportunities.
2. Develop a liturgy in which one can commit or recommit to following Jesus.
3. Create a class using the ELCA resources regarding human sexuality using the resource "Journey Faithfully Together."
4. Build awareness of our current prayer team, learn more about prayer, and develop more prayer ministries.
5. Expand all of our adult discipleship opportunities, including prayer, scripture, and sharing one's faith.
6. Use the multimedia equipment to have an occasional faith-based movie night and discussion.
7. Develop a ministry of daily devotionals to e-mail to people and to be available on the web page.
8. Continue to have congregational learning events like *The Purpose Driven Life* book and the "Getting to Know Jesus" sermon series.
9. Provide mission opportunities for adults.

Congregational Care and Fellowship

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts 2:44-47)

The Bible is clear that our love for Jesus is partly lived out through loving, caring relationships with our neighbor. As we are faithful to our mission of growing more disciples, we will encourage everyone to be a part of this caring, Christian community of fellowship.

1. Add more fellowship events like the church picnic and Advent Night.
2. Add small groups or support groups for those in different areas of concern such as grief, cancer or divorce.
3. Expand our food ministry to include more frequent and broader support for the congregation, including assistance with a funeral luncheon.
4. Have more summer activities to build our community and to stay more connected throughout the summer.
5. Increase awareness of those who are not able to attend worship so they are not forgotten.
6. Develop an "adopt-a-grandparent" program.
7. Develop a mother's group which would provide support, resources and encouragement to new mothers.
8. Develop more sporting activities and leagues.
9. Develop a yearly marriage retreat.
10. Develop a ministry of individual prayer partners who relate to those with special needs such as being new in their faith or having an illness.
11. Coordinate the ministry of delivering the altar flowers to those who have special needs.
12. Continue to expand our health care ministry to provide non-medical care, education and resources.
13. Use the fellowship hall in conjunction with the worship services as a place to receive information about various ministries.
14. Continue to grow our visitation ministry through staff and volunteers.

Evangelism

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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19, 20)

A vital aspect of our love for neighbor is to help them grow as followers of Jesus Christ. This happens through bold invitation, friendship, encouragement and discipling as individuals and as a congregation. As Jesus did, we give our own desires and comfort away to serve the spiritual needs of others. Of the seven characteristics, this is the one in which we need to grow the most.

1. Continue to grow our methods, regularity, and finances for our outreach and advertising.
2. Significantly improve our evangelism strategy of outreach, welcoming and integration into the life of the congregation, including volunteer and paid staffing.
3. Hold one large outreach to the community to provide education, entertainment and/or spiritual growth per year.
4. Purchase a new sign for Swamp Pike which is larger, better lit, more visible and two sided.
5. Develop a ministry of greeters to improve the sense of welcome.
6. Purchase a portable sign to advertise special events.
7. Create and give out or sell shirts with the church name, logo and information to raise visibility.

Leadership and Using Our Gifts

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

God created each of us with unique ways to serve. Part of our goal as a congregation is to help everyone find, feed and free these gifts so that they become the disciples they were meant to be. This happens with and through staff, leaders and everyone at St. James. Additionally, we have the responsibility to care for and manage our finances, facilities and other infrastructure as tools to accomplish our mission.

1. Develop a communication committee to help sharpen our communication so that it is better, consistent and more long range, both within and outside the congregation.
2. Have a shorter quarterly leadership retreat which incorporates teaching, training, mutual communication and support.
3. Continue to offer support and training to other churches as God gives us opportunity and ability.
4. Look for ways to add ministries which require less structured participation.
5. Consider purchasing an automated dialer (calling machine) to inform the congregation and community about upcoming events.
6. Be attentive to the work load of staff and adjust compensation and job descriptions as necessary.
7. Creatively thank and lift up ministries and participants to celebrate how God is using the people at St. James.
8. Continue to use the website as a way of improving communication and sharing of resources, especially among leaders.
9. Continue to maintain a solid financial base through a strong stewardship emphasis, year-round encouragement of good stewardship, the Biblical concept of tithing and effective financial communication.
10. Create a "committee night" on which most committees meet to encourage more participation and to make better use of leadership.
11. Have more opportunities to learn about the different ways to become active at St. James.
12. Commit to a process in which we evaluate our building needs, especially in the areas of worship, classrooms, temperature control, storage, parking and begin the fundraising to expand, renovate or relocate our facilities. Also look to purchase contiguous land when possible.

Serving Others

Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43-45)

Another way that we concretely live out our love for Jesus is through our love for neighbor, especially for those in need. When serving our neighbor, we see in them the face of Jesus and we become more like Jesus, who came to sacrifice for us.

1. Continually seek new opportunities to serve our neighbor.
2. Develop an Easter outreach similar to Operation Shining Star and Operation Smart Start.
3. Seek ways to partner with and increase awareness of the many different ministries in our community and how one can donate, support or volunteer.
4. Hold a missions fair to educate and connect the congregation with service and volunteer opportunities in our community.
5. Support an overseas missionary.
6. Consider utilizing our facilities to house "One Night At a Time," a temporary homeless shelter ministry.
7. Continue our open door policy of providing facilities to support ministries in our community.
8. Sponsor community education and growth events cooperatively with other agencies and institutions for the general improvement of our neighborhood.
9. Consider starting a ministry for single parents.
10. Begin a ministry to the Montgomery County Geriatric Center to provide needed items to the residents during non-holiday seasons.
11. Increase participation in the Habitat for Humanity ministry.

Worship

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Matthew 18:20)

In worship we individually and corporately have the opportunity and responsibility to praise, thank and glorify God with passion and reverence. At the same time, we recognize who God is in our lives and become challenged to be who God wants us to be. Our worship should be an inviting, faithful, creative and relevant time to grow in faith.

1. For one year, try a third worship service which is similar to the 9 am service on Saturday at 5 pm. In conjunction with this service add a Christian Education opportunity.
2. In conjunction with a renovation project, adapt the sanctuary for nave handicap accessibility, flexibility, more comfortable seating and also improved multimedia and sound capabilities.
3. Move the 10:30 am traditional service back to 10:45 am to help alleviate parking congestion.
4. Continue to introduce new music into the traditional service and traditional music into the contemporary service.
5. Seek to bring in special musical groups and have more of them as a part of worship.
6. Have a guest speaker or guest musical group from a different ethnic background to promote multiculturalism.
7. Begin a children's choir in addition to Sunday School musical presentations.

Thank You Visioning Team

I want to take this space to express my deep thanks to our visioning team who spent so much time and energy working on this process. Your commitment, dedication, participation and your wrestling with God and His plan for our congregation is much more appreciated than I can put into words. I'm sure, after seeing the scope and magnitude of what this team has wrestled with, that you will also express your thanks to this team for all they have done.

Even more so, future followers of Jesus will be blessed by the dedication of this team and by their willingness to seek God's will. For those who we do not yet know, but trust that God will bring and grow because of the efforts of this team, I especially want to express my thanks!

In Christ,

PASTOR STUART



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