



THAT ALL MAY BE FED

Congregational Mission Planning 2012-2013

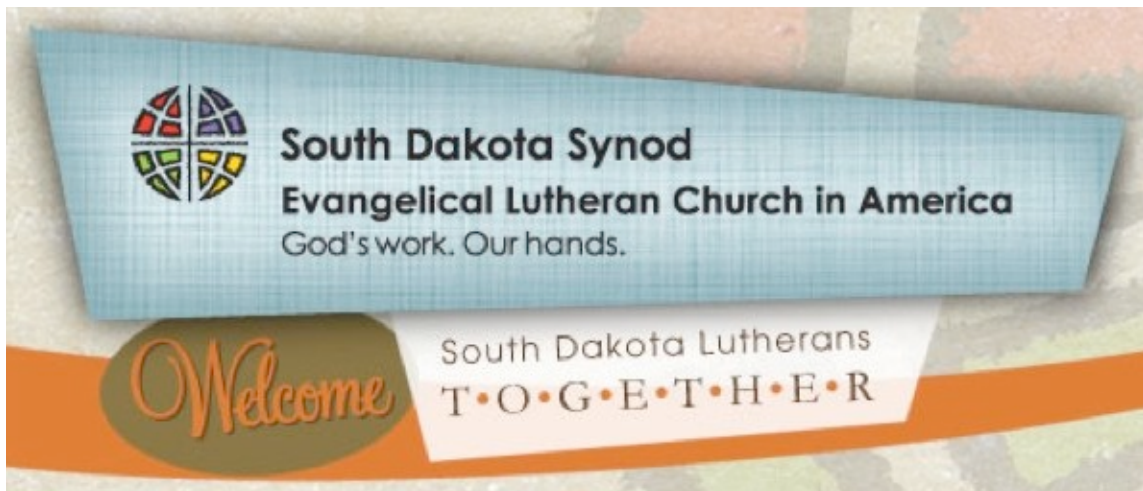


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This document is available for download on the synod website: www.sdsynod.org

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSION PLANNING: THAT ALL MAY BE FED

Dear Friends in Christ:

At the 2011 Assembly you enthusiastically endorsed our new vision of the South Dakota Synod.

That All May Be Fed: Nurtured in Word and Sacrament, God sends us to become a joyful sign of God's abundant blessing as we:

- **proclaim** the good news of Jesus to every hungry soul,
- **share** compassion with all who suffer, and
- **feed** all whose bodies lack nourishment.

And you approved the following Core Values: **Prayer, Human Dignity, Gratitude, the Neighbor, Grace** -- We commit ourselves to:

- Pray without ceasing,
- Respect the sacred dignity of every human being,
- Cultivate a deep sense of gratitude to God, the giver of all good things,
- Seek out and befriend the neighbor,
- Remain humble in the conviction that our calling comes by the grace of God.

With the adoption of our vision we have an opportunity to work together "That All May be Fed." The next step is for each of our congregations to develop a plan for how we will proclaim the good news, share compassion and feed the hungry in the many communities across our synod. Imagine the transformative power of over 100,000 Christians working together to feed our neighbor as we address the deep physical and spiritual hungers of our communities! To that end, I hope you will give considerable time and effort into creating a missional plan around our new vision statement.

Here are three steps to creating a good plan for God's Mission:

- 1) Listen to God – Bible study resources are provided here, and additional resources can be found in the "Missional Toolbox" on our website at www.sdsynod.org
- 2) Listen to each other and to the community -- Listen for the assets and gifts as well as the hopes and hurts. Listening resources are provided here and additional resources can be found in the "Missional Toolbox" on our website at www.sdsynod.org.
- 3) Write a "missional plan" based on what you are hearing from God and each other – a format for your missional plan is included here in this resource.

A form for reporting the results of your conversations and mission plans is in the back of this booklet. Please return this form to the synod office and keep a copy in your congregation's files. Our 2013 Synod Assembly will include a celebration of your congregation's commitment to mission. Take advantage of this opportunity.

What a powerful witness for Christ when over 200 congregations intentionally reach out to our communities to feed the people in their deepest spiritual and physical hunger! If you need help along the way, your synod staff is available to help you.

God's Blessings,



Bishop David Zellmer

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

JUNE 2012

At synod assembly, congregations receive the challenge to engage in intentional mission planning.

JULY 2012

Mission planning materials are sent out to each congregation with letters of invitation to rostered leaders and lay leaders to attend “Burgers with the Bishop” which will focus on mission planning.

August and September 2012

Council and lay leaders appointed to assist with mission planning attend “Burgers with the Bishop.”

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2012

Engage in the Bible Study provided. This can be done by council members, adult/youth study groups, anyone participating in the planning process, and anyone interested.

Meet with community leaders.

Discuss what has been learned about the community and what impact that might have on the ministry of the congregation – That all may be fed!

Keep the congregation informed and ask for their continued prayerful support.

DECEMBER, 2012 - FEBRUARY 2013

Develop a mission plan for your congregation.

Incorporate into the plan the congregation’s commitment for financial generosity.

Send a report of your plans to the synod office.

FEBRUARY – JUNE 2013

Begin putting your plans into actions.

JUNE 2013

Celebrate our synod-wide commitment to mission at the synod assembly!

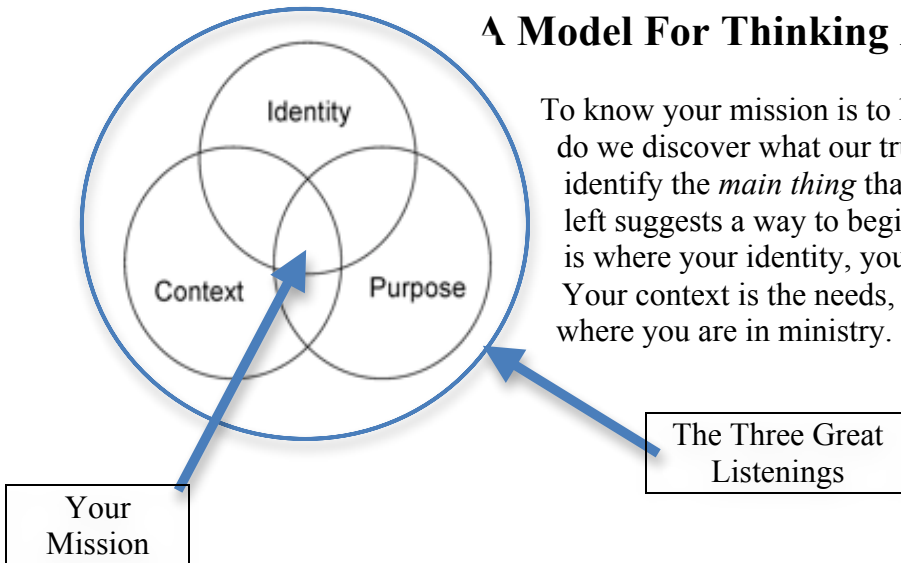
July 2013...

Revisit and revise the plan, keep moving forward in God’s Mission!

OUR CONGREGATION'S TIMELINE

STEPS	DATE	PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETED
Distribute materials to council			
Meet with Council to determine who will oversee this process			
Conduct planning team meeting			
Make arrangements to work with other local congregations if appropriate			
Determine the community leaders with whom you will converse			
Engage as many people as possible in the Bible study provided in the materials			
Make arrangements to meet with community leaders			
After meeting with community leaders, talk with one another about what you heard (meet with other congregations)			
Ask, "How does the community bless us?" and "How does our presence bless the community?"			
Begin to formulate a list of mission plans based on study of Scripture and what we've learned about how all may be fed			
If you already have a mission plan, review it in light of what you've learned			
Report to council and begin to plan for financial commitment to the mission plan			
Share the mission plan with the congregation			
Once the congregation is comfortable with the plan, submit final report			
Send the mission plan to the synod office			
Get started on carrying out the plan			

A Model For Thinking About Mission



To know your mission is to know your purpose and calling, but how do we discover what our true mission is? How does a congregation identify the *main thing* that God is asking of them? The diagram at left suggests a way to begin to zero in on an answer. The mission is where your identity, your purpose and your context intersect. Your context is the needs, hopes, hurts and gifts of the community where you are in ministry.

Discovering your mission as a congregation begins with an exploration into what God’s vision is your Church. ***This happens when we engage in the “three great listenings:” Listening to God, Listening to each other, and Listening to community.*** These three great listenings should surround everything we do in mission planning. All of the materials in the missional tool-box are designed to assist you in the three great listenings.

It is in the context of our listening to God’s vision for the Church on earth, that we can then ask the specific questions about our congregation’s mission. We will ask about our congregation’s identity, purpose, and context. Together as a synod we have discerned God calling us to the vision, “That All May be Fed.” This planning guide is intended to help live into that vision and to clarify your congregation’s own sense of calling and purpose.

Identity/Who Are We?

- As People of God’s creating?
- As Lutheran Christians?
- As generous disciples of Jesus Christ?
- As a congregation set in this community?
- How are we blessed and who do we bless?

CLAIMED

Purpose/Why Are We Here?

- What does Scripture tell us?
- Where does prayer and reflection lead us?
- How are we different from other organizations?

GATHERED

Context/Who Is Our Neighbor?

- Within the congregation?
- Within the community?
- Within the wider church and world?

SENT



*Claimed by Christ in our baptisms,
our identity is given*



*Nurtured in
Word and
Sacrament, our
purpose
becomes clear*



*Sent into the world,
we live our faith in a particular context*

**NURTURED IN WORD AND SACRAMENT AND SENT TO PROCLAIM, SHARE
AND FEED, OUR PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S MISSION IS BORN!**

Mission is . . .

- what we are called to be as we participate in God's action in the world
- discovered at the intersection of identity, purpose and context

**Vision: Nurtured in Word and Sacrament,
God sends us to become a joyful sign
of God's abundant blessing.**

A Seed: The Joyful Sign¹
Introductory Study

Opening Prayer

Lord let our hearts be good soil, open to the seed of your word. Open our eyes to see where you are sending us to be your embodied word planted in the soil of our world. As the seed is crushed to make our bread, so make us a blessing of life and a nourishing presence in the lives of our neighbors, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and brother. Amen.

Discussion Questions

Dear Leader: invite answers from the group, not everyone needs to answer every question, but work hard to insure that everyone is invited to share something at some point. You do not need to ask every question, just enough to get some good discussion going, and get folks thinking about seeds and planting and harvesting – something Jesus' audience would have had on their mind all the time!

1. Think of a time of planting seeds that stands out in your mind - when you planted seeds as a child and/or in your vocation as a farmer, or gardener. What feelings did you have as you planted? How did it go? Were there setbacks, frustrations? Anyone care to share what you thought of?
2. Take a seed into your hand and keep it throughout the Bible Study. What do you notice about it? How do these words apply to a seed?

Inert/Dead - Alive

Incomplete - Complete

Vulnerable - Tough

Improbable/Doubtful – Potential

Hopeless - Hopeful

Weak - Strong



3. How is it that these totally opposite words can apply to the same thing?
4. Do some of these same opposites apply to you? Your congregation? How so?

Focus Text: Mark 4:26-29

[Jesus] also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

This introductory session takes longer than the remaining three sessions. Please plan accordingly.

For this first session, each participant should be provided with a seed. When choosing seeds, pick one that is significant enough in size to be studied and reflected upon.

¹ An expanded version if this study for use as a full planning retreat or for a four-session planning series among leadership is available on the synod website (sdsynod.org) in the missional toolbox.

READ ALOUD

Have you ever wondered, “Why is it that some people hear the word of God and believe while others hear the same word and do not believe?” Or perhaps you have asked, “How is it that ANYONE comes to believe such an outrageous story!?” Maybe you have wondered, “What is my role in this unfolding drama of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ?” “What is God doing in my church and my community to bring people to faith in Jesus?” This parable is a way of answering these questions, by opening the eyes of Jesus’ disciples to see the mystery of God’s growing and often hidden reign.

1. Tell us about a tree or plant you have seen growing in an unlikely place or against all odds.
2. How do you think people come to believe and trust in Jesus?

Engaging the Text

Read Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

1. Mark has committed a grammatical error. Do you see it?
2. In what ways does this sentence fragment contain the “DNA” of this story?
3. Consider the seed in your hand. How is this way of beginning a story similar to the way a plant begins from a seed?

The Gospel according to St. Mark begins with this fragment of a sentence – “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” It is incomplete (like a seed), but (like a seed) it contains everything we need to know about Jesus: “Jesus is the Messiah; he is God’s Son; this is good news!” That’s the “DNA” of this story. It is unlikely that Mark would accidentally start with an incomplete sentence. In literature there is a name for an incomplete sentence at the beginning of a story that contains much of what you need to know: it is called the “title.” If this is the title of Mark’s gospel, then that is significant, because it means that Mark’s whole gospel is intentionally incomplete. It is not the whole story; it is only “*the beginning of the story.*” Consider the possibility that YOU are the rest of the story!

It is no coincidence that this story, which begins with an incomplete sentence, also ends with an incomplete sentence. The literal translation of Mark 16:8 is: “*And they went out quickly from the place, because fear and great wonder had come on them: and they said nothing to anyone, because they were full of fear that...*” Bible scholars agree that this verse is the original ending of Mark’s gospel. Mark has committed another grammatical error. Mark stopped writing (mid-sentence!), because the story isn’t finished. It’s still going. 2000 years later the seed is still being scattered, and it is still growing, “we know not how.”

At the end of Mark’s Gospel a question hangs in the air – “how will it be possible for anyone to hear the good news and come to believe when Jesus’ disciples are all hiding in fear?”

And the answer is in our seed parables: “Someone scatters seed on the ground.²⁷ Night and day, whether she sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though she does not know how.” The disciples are the seeds carrying the DNA of this good news. They have been cast into the soil of the world, and like those seeds they are weak, hopeless, doubtful and incomplete, but like our seeds, with the word that is planted in them, they

are also strong, hopeful, and full of potential. Make no mistake, the seed will sprout and grow, it will produce a harvest! God's reign comes!

...YOU are the seed.

Of course, Jesus teaches that **the Word of God is the seed**. However, it is also clear that in Mark's gospel this Word is never un-incarnate – the Word always takes on flesh – it always has a human delivery vehicle! So in a sense, we, as bearers of the word, are the seed – or at least the husk of the seed!

Applying the Text to the Vision – “A Joyful sign of God's abundant blessing”

God has gifted you and placed you in your community for a purpose: to be a joyful sign of God's abundant blessing. In your community, you are the seed bearing human agents of the healing, life giving, soul convicting and saving Word of God!

You are God's seeds of the Kingdom – explore together the question, “What is unique about you?”

Explore together the following ways in which you are unique as God's seeds of the kingdom. As a group, call out and list as many as you can in 10 minutes or less. Put the list in a place where all can see.

- What passions and hopes?
- What talents?
- What significant relationships with individuals or organizations in the community?
- What physical assets?

Consider conducting an “Asset Mapping” exercise for a deeper exploration of your giftedness – check out the online missional toolbox on the SD Synod Website for a guide on conducting an asset mapping exercise.

Respond and Celebrate

Explore together where your unique gifts and passions align with what you know about the hopes and hurts of your community. On a piece of newsprint (chalkboard, whiteboard, smart board, overhead projector, computer projector... you get the point) put up all of the gifts and assets you've identified on one side. On the other side name a few of the real hopes and hurts of your community. Now connect the dots – Where or in what situation in your town, city or open country congregation is God calling you to be “planted” next? How might God be calling you to be the joyful sign of God's abounding blessing in a new way?

Closing Song You are the Seed (WOV #753)

Closing Prayer

Keep, O Lord, your household the church in our steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.²

² From the Book of Common Prayer, contemporary Collect for the Season after Pentecost, Proper 6.

Vision Practice 1

Proclaim the Good News of Jesus to Every Hungering Soul

Opening Prayer

Living God, help us to put on our listening ears. May we listen with open hearts and minds to your word and to each other. Draw us closer to the light, to your Son, Jesus Christ. Equip us with the courage that we need to never be fearful of sharing the light of Christ, the good news, to all who need to hear. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Discussion Question(s) invite each person to respond to one of the following questions

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 how nervous do you get when asked to speak in front of a group? What helps you get through it?
2. Have you ever discovered something that had been hidden or forgotten that turned out to be valuable?
3. Have you ever been outside when it was dark without a light source? Why? What happened?

Focus Text Mark 4:21-23

[Jesus] said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

Engaging the Text

In the gospel of Mark, the parables both reveal and conceal who Jesus is and what he is doing. For those who have ears to hear, it comes as good news of the kingdom of God. For those who refuse to hear, it only sounds like a jumbled jive from a man named Jesus. How will we discover our vision of working together as a people of God who are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus to every hungry soul?

There are many places in the Bible that the image of light is used. Read Psalm 119:105 ***Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.***

1. How does this verse help you understand Jesus' story about the lampstand?
2. Why would anyone try and hide a lamp?
3. How (or in what ways) do we hide the good news of Jesus?
4. How (or in what ways) do we let the good news of Jesus shine brightly in our lives?

To begin this Bible study, in the center of your table gather together one large candle (perhaps the Christ candle from your worship space) and enough tea lights for each participant. If there is any concern about open flame, all of the candles can be electrical. Only light the large candle.

Jesus is not only God's word, but God's light that reaches the dark places. The good news of Jesus is not something to be hidden away, but is to be shared and passed on to others to let it shine. The good news is that we are called to work together to tell and show others the light of Christ.

Applying the Text to the Vision Practice

It may not always be easy to share Christ's light with those around us. We become reluctant, nervous, or worried about what others will think of us or that we won't know what to say. The good news is that we share *Christ's* light (not our own) and it happens in our daily lives through both our words and our actions.

1. What are the dark places in your life and in your community that need the light of the good news of Jesus?
2. Who hungers for the light in your community? How can you reach them with God's word?

Don't think too hard! Sometimes, it takes the simplest idea to share the good news. It could be helping a neighbor with their yard work and simply telling them you are offering a hand out of God's love. It could be saying hello to someone in your community who feels friend-less. Maybe your congregation can create and distribute a prayer resource for people to use in the home or on vacation. Make a list of ways in which you and your congregation can reach out in your community to share the good news to those who hunger for the light. Then, put a star next to the 2 that you will work on in the next 6 months.

Respond and Celebrate

Light the large candle in the center of the table and say, "Christ's light is good news for us and for all people! We are thankful for the ways in which we reach one another in God's love. We ask for courage to not be afraid to share the good news in all that we do and say in our daily lives so that Christ's light is on display. Psalm 27:1 reminds us – **"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"** Now, give each participant a tea light and light it off of the large candle (or turn them on if they are electric) and say, "You carry Christ's light with you. Go and let it shine brightly!"



Closing Song This Little Light of Mine (ELW 677)

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for the ways in which we share your light on a lampstand. We thank you for the ways in which we share Christ's light in our community. Help us to let your light shine in our daily lives. Encourage us to proclaim the good news to every hungering soul. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our light. Amen.

Vision Practice 2

Share Compassion with All Who Suffer



Focus Text Mark 4:24-29

And [Jesus] said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.²⁵ For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

[Jesus] also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

Opening Prayer & Time of Sharing

Go around the room and each person fills in their own personal thanksgiving, "Thank you , Lord, for the compassion I experienced from _____."

Applying the Text to the Vision

This short little parable is often called the parable of the seed growing of itself. There seems to be confidence or faith in the one who sowed the seed that allows him to sleep. What is happening to that seed? How is life and growth taking place for that seed under the ground?

The word "share" means to divide and parcel into shares, to cut. When we think of sharing we often romanticize it acting as if sharing is always pleasant and easy. Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill and Douglas Morrison in their book Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life, remind us that compassion means "to suffer with."

- ✘ ***How do we take seriously our mission to share compassion with all who suffer?***
- ✘ ***When have you found it difficult to sharing compassion?***
- ✘ ***How do we begin to see, notice and reach out to all? How about people we don't like? How about people with whom we don't agree?***

We are incarnational people who believe that God took on flesh and now acts in the world through us, the body of Christ. Daniel Berrigan once said, "It all comes down to this: Whose flesh are you touching and why? Whose flesh are you recoiling from and why?" How do we honestly face these questions in our personal lives

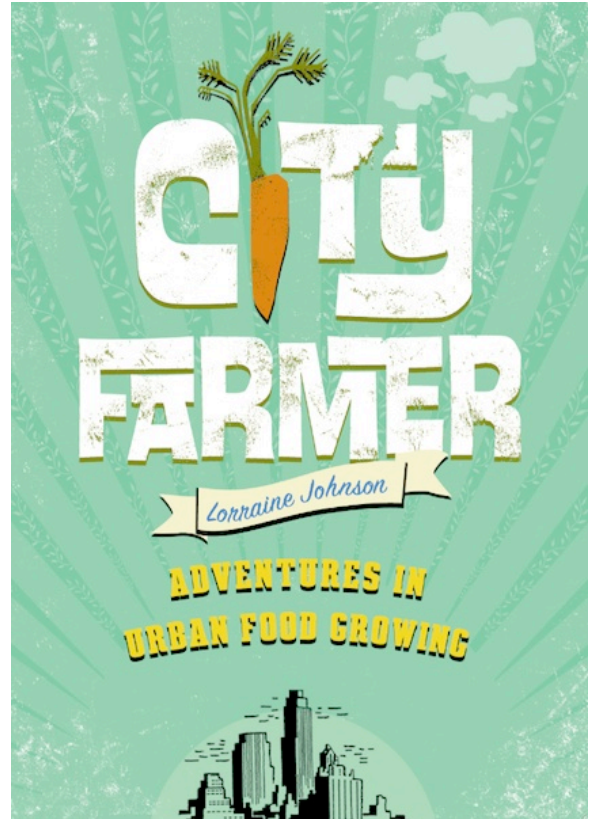
and in our congregation? Can we be honest about our hopes and fears as we search for ways to shared compassion with all who suffer?

Respond and Celebrate

In her book City Farmer: Adventures in Urban Food Growing, Lorraine Johnson writes, “Real food carries it dirt along with it, no matter how hard we scrub. Soil memory lurks in the folds & wrinkles & even in the smooth skins of fruits and vegetables, giving them their character and their flavor. The French call this *terroir* and while the term is mainly deployed for wine it applies equally well to everything edible. Flavor identity comes from place.

As we think about suffering we know that often our own sadness, grief, trauma, and brokenness allows us to empathize with others in ways we never imagined as we were walking through our own valley of darkness.

List all the ways people in your group have experienced suffering either as the one suffering or the one providing compassion. Now list all the ways that were helpful in how compassion was shared. How you currently offering that compassion in your congregation? What are ways you could expand your caring acts?



Closing Song We Are Called (ELW 720)

Closing Prayer

Holy One, we call out your name in as many ways as we can. We fix your role towards us in the ways we need. We approach you from the particular angle of our life. We do all that, not because you need to be identified, but because of our deep need, our deep wound, our deep hope. And then, we are astonished that while our names for you serve for a moment, you break beyond them in your freedom, you show yourself yet fresh beyond our utterance, you retreat into your splendor beyond our grasp. We are – by your freedom and your hiddenness – made sure yet again that you are God...beyond us, for us, but beyond us, not at our beck and call, but always in your own way. We stammer about your identity, only to learn that it is our own unsettling before you that wants naming. Beyond all our explaining and capturing and fixing you...we give you praise, we thank you for your fleshed presence in suffering love, and for our names that you give us. Amen.

From Awed in Heaven, Rooted in Earth, prayers of Walter Brueggemann

Did You Know

1 out of every 7 individuals in South Dakota lives at or below the poverty line.

Combined the Sioux Falls and Rapid City food pantries served over 65,000 people last year.

Almost one-half of those served by food pantries in South Dakota are infants and children.

Resources

Feeding South Dakota
feedingsouthdakota.org

ELCA World Hunger
elca.org

Bread for the World
bread.org

South Dakota Synod
sdsynod.org

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?

~James 2:15-16

Vision Practice 3

Feed All Whose Bodies Lack Nourishment

Opening Prayer

God of Abundant Life, through your disciples, you fed the 5,000 as once you had fed your people manna in the wilderness. Day by day, God, you are our provision. As a mustard seed grows into the greatest of all plants, may the seed of your Word be grown in our life together that we would become a life-giving sign of your Kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Discussion Question(s) *invite each person to respond to one of the following questions*

1. Have you ever struggled with growing something in your yard or in a garden?
2. Have you ever been a part of something that became much larger /better than expected?
3. Has someone ever encountered you with a small gesture that made a big difference?

Focus Text Mark 4:30-32

[Jesus] also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

Engaging the Text

"The lame will walk, the blind will see and the dead will live again..." The promises of the Kingdom of God are great. Yet, the reality of our human condition is frail. Despite the miracles and signs people have questions. What is the kingdom of God? How does it work? When will it come?

In response Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a seed. Something small and insignificant. Something by itself which can do nothing. Yet, when planted in soil, feed with water and sun, the seed becomes more. More than a combination of just seed and soil and water and sun – but instead a new creation.

Jesus' parable reminds us of a parable God told long ago through the prophet Ezekiel. "I will take a spring...I myself will plant it...in order that it may produce

boughs and bear fruit...under it every kind of bird will live.” (Ezekiel 17:22-24)

Jesus’ parable is an encouragement to the small, disregarded and seemingly insignificant disciples. What you do, who you are matters. God is at work. Kingdom acts are never done in isolation but rather always begin with God are sustained by God and brought to completion by God. “...what we will be has not yet been revealed.” (1 John 3:2)

Applying the Text to the Vision Practice

The disturbing reality of the hungry in our world is so overwhelming that the small gifts we have to offer seem inconsequential in their ability to affect change. Yet, the parable of the mustard seed reminds us that there is often more potential in small kingdom acts (such as feeding the hungry) than we would first imagine. This is true because our kingdom acts are NOT “our” kingdom acts but rather they are God’s. God’s work. Our hands. God is at work giving the world “daily bread”. Good news! Our small seeds of compassion, when **given** away, become kingdom acts growing into “the greatest of all shrubs” providing life for all.



Respond and Celebrate

Make two columns. In the first column list all the ways that the people of your congregation feed the hungry. This should include formal ministries, participation in other ministries and even things that you have heard people do individually. In the second column, list ideas of other things that you might be able to do in your congregation to participate in feeding the hungry of this world. Include all ideas big and small. Rejoice! Your seeds are accomplishing big things.

Closing Song Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ (ELW #674)

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are the provider of all good things. We give you thanks for your many acts of providence and seek your forgiveness for the ways our sin have stopped all from being fed. Save and redeem us that we may be joyful signs of your abundant blessing, offering bread for the hungry and hope for the brokenhearted. We ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Bread of Life. Amen.

CONVERSATION WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

We live in the context of community. Before starting a plan for mission, a congregation should look at its context beyond the church doors. (Context is the area around the church where members live and work. Context is also global, especially if you are involved with missionary sponsorship or with one of our companion synods in Cameroon or Nicaragua.)

One way to discover more about your neighborhood is to make contacts within the community. This may be done in a number of ways:

1. Individual contacts - take a community leader to lunch, or better yet, make an appointment to meet them in their place of work.
2. Group conversation - bring a number of community leaders together for conversation and a meal. (Some congregations have done a series of meals for a month with targeted community leaders and groups. They also invited spouses and provided childcare.)

Who are the leaders in your community? Here is a partial list of leaders who have valuable insights and information about the community. You will want to select a few of these leaders from your community. Working together with other congregations may provide opportunities for a greater number of conversations.

Chief of Police	Fire Chief	Mayor
Township Supervisor	Teachers	School board
City Council	Parent groups	Civic Groups
Chamber of Commerce	Bankers	School Officials
Congressional Representatives	Social Workers	Realtors
Boy/Girl Scouts	Business owners	County Health workers

Before making contacts in the community, decide whether it might be more helpful to join in these conversations with other Lutherans or your local ecumenical ministerial. **The goal is to gain a better understanding of community needs and opportunities.** You will also want to learn how the church is viewed by the community.

It will be helpful to prepare a list of questions before meeting with the community leaders. Always start off on a positive note. Be realistic about how much you can discuss in the time period agreed upon. Here are some questions to start you thinking:

1. What are the strengths of our community?
2. What are the population trends?
3. Do you see “fears” that people have?
4. What would you consider to be three major challenges in this community?
5. Where have you seen churches helpful in addressing community needs?
6. Where can the church help today?
7. Do you have an impression of our congregation?

Listen carefully and with an open mind. Ask questions to clarify. Take notes to refer to later. List things that you learned about your community that are important to ministry planning.

EVANGELISM

Going Back to the Future

Evangelism. What does this word bring to mind for us as Christians? No doubt, many of the images that come to mind are centered around the firebrand preachers we see on television or on street corners or in pulpits of US American churches that call themselves conservative evangelicals. But, is that what the scripture writers refer to when they speak of those who have good news to share?

Evangelists were people who brought the *good message* of Jesus Christ to a community in word and deed. Like Paul, evangelists shared the good message not only in spoken and written word, but also in their lives, how they lived. The *good message* was shared with gentleness and kindness. We, in mainline Protestantism, especially with the first-mentioned understanding of evangelism, have a tendency to distance ourselves from it. But, for us, especially when we call ourselves Evangelical Lutherans, evangelism is a core part of why we are here! Luther, in his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer in the *Large Catechism*, puts it this way:

"We pray here at the outset that all this may be realized in us, and that God's name may be praised through his holy Word, and our Christian lives. This we ask, both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and in order that it may gain recognition and followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world."

We should want the Lord's Kingdom to be realized now! In us! In our words and deeds! In other words, in the relationships we establish with others. Evangelism is the *good message* of Jesus Christ manifesting not just in our breath, but also in flesh and bone, in our very being! But what is to be manifested in us?

John gives us insight when he records Jesus' charge to his disciples as he prepares to leave them, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for others."* (John 13:35) Love of others is a key element for our identity as Christ's messengers. So Christian evangelism can be nothing other than relational, and within the scriptures relationships are to be lived out rightly or righteously. Righteousness means right relationships, and relationships must be lived out with others and right relationship must be lived out for others.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." (Philippians 2: 3-7)

So evangelism is not programmatic marketing techniques, but rather it is pragmatic interactions with others as Christ's loving relationship with his church is lived out in his sisters and brothers here on earth. How do we, the ecclesia, the church, live out this practical understanding of evangelism as an ongoing outgrowth of right relationships? It is then that we will truly be living the *good message*, evangelism.

MISSION PLANNING

Once we have grounded ourselves in prayer and Scripture, we can truly explore what it means to be the people of God in a particular location. Hearing from local community leaders adds insight into the specific needs and opportunities that are present in our context. Now it is time to ask ourselves what God is calling us to be about in this place, at this time.

We know that as Christians we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Our primary mission is to make the love of God known to others in our world. So, we need to look at how we are sharing God's Word in our ministry. Does our worship provide an opportunity for people to return thanks to God and receive inspiration for Christian living? Do we provide opportunities for young and old alike to learn more about the Bible and grow in a faithful relationship with our Lord? Does our congregation build up the bond of unity through opportunities for support and fellowship?

We know that as disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to move out into the world. Through the years, Christians have discovered that interacting with people in need is one way to faithfully witness to the love of God. What have we learned about the needs of people in our community? What have we learned about the deep physical and spiritual hungers of people in our community? What have we discovered of our own gifts and passions? ***Where do the gifts and passions that God has given us align with the real hopes and hurts – the deep hungers – of our community?***

We know that Jesus defined “neighbor” in a very broad way. How are we participating in service and witness to people who are not in our immediate neighborhood? How can our global outreach and accompaniment demonstrate to people of our local community that God's love is active today? How do our local and our global outreach efforts support one another?

By asking ourselves these questions, we can begin to formulate a specific plan for how this congregation will intentionally fulfill the mission of Christ. It isn't *our* mission, it is Christ's mission. We are the hands and feet of Christ at work in the world. What is the mission that can best serve and point to Christ in our context?



A GUIDE FOR DOING MISSION PLANNING

If your congregation already *has* an adopted mission plan or mission priorities, begin by reviewing those plans. Renew your commitment to your priorities or make necessary changes by asking:

- Do our priorities still make sense in light of what we've learned in our conversations with community leaders?
- Are our priorities in line with the call that we've heard through participating in prayer and Bible Study?

If your congregation does *not* have a plan for carrying out specific mission priorities, this is an opportunity to begin. As you develop your list of mission plans or priorities, keep in mind the three components introduced in the beginning of this booklet: Identity, Context, and Purpose. Mission planning happens when these components are considered in relationship to one another. Ask these questions:

- As we prayerfully consider God's call to us in Scripture, what is our primary purpose as God's people in this place?
- As we listen and discuss the strengths and needs in our community, where are the places (what are the issues) that create opportunities for us to witness to God's presence through service to others? What are the deep hungers of people in our community?
 - What are the deep hungers of the soul in your community?
 - Who is suffering in your community?
 - Who is hungry?
- ***How will we:***
 - ***Be "joyful sign of God's abundant blessing?"***
 - ✚ ***Proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to every hungry soul?***
 - ✚ ***Share compassion with all who suffer?***
 - ✚ ***Feed all whose bodies lack nourishment?***
- Answering the above, what specific ministries and activities would strengthen and renew our congregation?
- What specific ministries and activities would allow us to reach out into the community more effectively to make Christ's presence known?

Keep these questions before you as you study the word, speak with each other and listen to your community. This will enable you to brainstorm many ministry possibilities. Trying to do them all will not be realistic, so depending on the size and energy level of your congregation, you will need to select a few specific ministries on which to focus for the next year. Be sure to agree upon who will be responsible for seeing that each priority gets put into action. Submitting the plan to council for approval and sharing widely in the congregation will build ownership and excitement among more people.



REPORT OF OUR CONGREGATIONAL MISSION PLANNING PROCESS

Congregation: _____

Location: _____

Person submitting the report: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

1. Prior to the request that we engage in *Beyond Our Doors: A Congregational Mission Planning Process*, we:
 - ___ were already carrying out the results of an intentional planning process
 - ___ have been engaged in mission planning in the past, but are not currently following those plans
 - ___ had never engaged in intentional mission planning

2. As part of this process, we engaged in the following:
 - ___ called our congregation to participate prayerfully
 - ___ completed the three Bible studies offered in the materials
 - ___ met with community leaders
 - ___ shared with other congregations in our conversations with community leaders
 - ___ designated specific mission goals

3. Who participated in your planning process? (select all that apply)
 - ___ congregation council
 - ___ pastor
 - ___ other rostered leader(s)
 - ___ one or more committees of the congregation
 - ___ a committee especially formed for this process
 - ___ interested members of the congregation
 - ___ other: _____

4. List the community leaders (and their positions) with whom you visited.

5. List things you learned about your community that are important for your ministry planning. What are the deep hungers of people in your community?

6. List the mission goals that your congregation will be working on in the next year.

7. List any long term mission goals that your congregation will be exploring further.

8. As you review your mission priorities, look at your congregational budget. Are those priorities allocated financial support?

9. Does your congregation teach members about proportionate giving as a grateful response to God's presence in their lives?

10. Do your members understand how the three expressions of this church — congregation, synod and the churchwide organization — work together to share God's boundless love with the world?

11. What portion of your members' weekly offerings will be shared with the synod and the churchwide organization for mission and ministry beyond your doors?

	2012 ACTUAL	2013 PROJECTED	% CHANGE
Weekly offerings pledged by members	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____ %
<i>Mission Support</i> ¹ budgeted for sharing with the synod and churchwide organization	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____ %
Percentage of <i>Mission Support</i> ³ (mission support divided by weekly offerings)	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %

Our gift to ***Mission Partners***⁴ will be in the amount of \$ _____

Thank you for sharing your experience with *That All May be Fed* with others in our synod. Please return responses to the synod office.

³ ***Mission Support*** is the portion of weekly offerings that your congregation shares with synodical and churchwide ministries for God's mission beyond the local congregation.

⁴ ***Mission Partners*** is the fund used to start new congregations, ethnic specific ministries and for renewal of congregations.