

# **The Vision for Advent Lutheran Church**

**We are Advent Lutheran Church. As diverse children of God, we strive to be the embodiment of that which God wants all people on earth to be. We love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We love our neighbor as ourselves, and express this love in service to others. By accepting God's gift of grace through our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God forever.**

**“Love God and Serve Neighbor”**

# The Mission of Advent Lutheran Church

The Mission of Advent Lutheran Church is to help all people:

- Love God more completely
- Serve our neighbors more effectively
- Strengthen our faith in salvation through belief in Christ Jesus

## **Expanded Vision Statement**

### **I. We are Advent Lutheran Church.**

- A. Advent Lutheran Church is a Christian fellowship of believers who name Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We welcome all who wish to share our fellowship.**
- B. Though we may be individuals in other aspects of our lives, we are one community joined together in our faith journey - to be reconciled with the God who created us.**
- C. Advent Lutheran is the place where we have found the kindred spirits and nurturing environment we need, to support and sustain us as we make this journey.**

### **II. As diverse children of God, we strive to be the embodiment of that which God wants all people on earth to be.**

- A. God created us with a definite plan in mind.**
- B. However, God also created us with a free will, and we have used that free will to invite sin into God's otherwise-perfect Creation.**
- C. Sin is that which separates or distances us from God.**
- D. We do not wish to live distanced from God, but rather to live close to God, so as to feel the warmth of God's love, and be illuminated by the wisdom of our Creator.**
- E. We cannot defeat sin ourselves. The only way we can return to the original plan which God had for us is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
- F. Our path is illuminated by the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, as preserved for us in the Scriptures.**

**III. We love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.**

**A. Concerning the will of God, when asked which of God's commandments is the first of all, Jesus answered, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:29-30)**

**B. This means we make God the center of our lives:**

**1. We worship God.**

**a) We stand in awe of the power and goodness of God.**

**b) We come together as a community to praise God and express our devotion to God with every means the Lord has given us to express ourselves - the spoken word, singing, music, dancing, pictures, et cetera - as we are moved by the Spirit.**

**2. We give thanks to God.**

**a) We stop to realize that everything we have, and everything needed to sustain our life on earth, is beyond our ability to create and is therefore a gift from God.**

**b) We express our unending gratitude to God for these blessings which God showers upon us daily.**

**3. We respect God's Creation.**

**a) We respect all of God's Creation, taking only what we need of the earth's resources and doing our utmost to conserve the balance of nature.**

**b) We understand that our true earthly needs, in order to carry out God's will, are very simple ones.**

**c) We show special respect for humankind, created in God's own image.**

**(1) We care for ourselves physically, so that our healthy bodies may enable us to do all things necessary to serve God both long and well on earth.**

**(2) We care for ourselves mentally, to maximize our ability to learn of and to serve God.**

**(3) We care for ourselves spiritually, to maximize the closeness of our relationship with our Lord.**

**(4) We care for our families as an extension of ourselves.**

**4. We seek to do God's will**

**a) We place the doing of God's will above all else in our lives.**

**b) We are first called to do God's will within our own families, and then in the larger community.**

**(1) We do God's will in ministering to our family's needs.**

**(2) As families, we support each other's efforts to minister to the larger community.**

**c) We do not allow ourselves to be diverted into pursuit of the earthly "gods" of power, prestige, possessions and pleasure, which would require our acting contrary to the will of the true God.**

**(1) We do this even though it may require us to place our relationship with God clearly above our relationship with a loved one.**

**d) We encourage each other to allow Christ to radically transform our hearts, and all else will then fall into place.**

**5. We seek to know God.**

**a) We study the Scriptures daily, guided by the Confessions of the Lutheran Church and the works of theologians who can help us better understand their meaning.**

**b) We share our insights with one another, to further our collective knowledge.**

**6. We open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit.**

- a) Knowing that God can see into the hidden depths of our hearts, we attempt to keep no secrets from God, but rather lay our souls bare before God willingly.
- b) Knowing that our sinful nature makes us largely blind to the will of God, we listen attentively to hear God speak to us through the Holy Spirit and guide us on the path we are to follow.

**7. We talk to God.**

- a) Throughout the day, we instinctively approach events and respond to events, both routine and uncommon, with spoken or silent prayer.
- b) We set aside quiet time daily, to allow God to come to us through meditation and communicate with us at the deepest level of which our souls are capable.

(1) In this we follow our Lord's example, as the Lord often went apart to pray.

**8. We keep the Sabbath.**

- a) We believe that God created people not only to work, but also to rest and to have fellowship with one another.
- b) In our busy world, we set aside a Sabbath as an opportunity to relax and reflect on our relationship with God, with self, and with others.

C. This is our "Journey Inward", in which we seek to know, and love completely, our God who created us, who saved us and who sustains us each day of our lives.

**IV. We love our neighbor as ourselves, and express this love in service to others.**

- A. After stating the first great commandment above, Jesus went on to say, "And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:39-40) MARK 12:31**
- B. Because God has taught us what it means to be loved, we have great love for each other as well as for all of God's creation.**
- 1. We realize that God has blessed us for a purpose - that we may be a blessing to others.**
  - 2. God does not give us life, and all that we have, simply for our own pleasure and enjoyment.**
  - 3. God wants us to use what we need, but then to share with others out of our abundance of time, money, talents and gifts.**
  - 4. In this, all members of Advent are ministers.**
- C. As a faith community, we are called to serve the spiritual needs of our neighbor and to make disciples of others.**
- 1. We reach out to share the Word of God, especially the joy of the Gospel message.**
  - 2. We share the Sacraments with fellow believers.**
  - 3. We bear witness to others of the power of God in our lives - our lives on earth as well as our eternal lives in heaven.**
- D. We attend to the physical and emotional needs of our neighbor in the same kind, and in the same measure, as we attend to those same needs in ourselves.**
- 1. We do not feed ourselves until we see that our neighbor is fed as well.**
  - 2. We do not clothe ourselves until we see that our neighbor is clothed as well.**

3. We do not shelter ourselves until we see that our neighbor is sheltered as well.
  4. Even as we need to be accepted, respected and loved by others, so do we accept, respect and love our neighbor.
- E. As for the question of who is our neighbor, we naturally include our friends. However, Jesus taught us that every person is our neighbor, even those who are different from us. This means that we open our arms to all our neighbors, especially those in greatest need, closing our eyes to superficial differences which might otherwise estrange us from one another.
1. We do not turn away from the sick because we fear or disapprove of the sickness, nor from the poor because we fear or disapprove of their poverty.
  2. We reach out and welcome a diversity of culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, dress, social class and economic status in all our associations.
  3. We reach out and welcome strangers into our midst the same as we welcome our friends, even as we would welcome Christ our Lord.
  4. We especially welcome children and youth, and see them as a vital and integral part of the congregation family, to be included and challenged to grow with us in faith.
- F. This is our "Journey Outward", in which we, being filled to overflowing with God's love for us, cannot help but reach out from within ourselves to extend that love to others. We are, above all, a servant church following a servant Master.

- V. By accepting God's gift of grace through our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God forever.**
- A. We are ever mindful that we are by nature sinful, and therefore separated from God.**
  - B. We acknowledge that we can never rid ourselves of sin, and therefore can never become reconciled with God through our own works.**
  - C. But God, in great goodness, has claimed us in the waters of our Baptism and continues to strengthen, sustain and nourish us through Christ's own body and blood as God comes to us in the Lord's Supper.**
  - D. Salvation is a gift of grace from God, but for the gift to become effective, we must accept it.**
  - E. We accept God's gift through faith alone - faith that Jesus was indeed the Christ, whose death on the cross proclaims us freed from our sins.**
  - F. What joy and power spring from this reconciliation with our God!**

## **Consolidation of Strategic Goals - 7/21/97**

### **I. Strategic Vision Goals**

- A. That Discipleship/Apostleship be lifted up as a prime area for growth in both understanding and action**
- B. That Stewardship of time, talents and treasure be systematically enhanced**
- C. That the most pressing Christian Education needs of the congregation, for all ages, be identified and met**

### **II. Strategic Infrastructure Goals**

- A. That current Staffing activities be focused on:**
  - 1. Maintaining youth ministry as a high priority for this congregation**
  - 2. Meeting the needs of the congregation for Christian Education**
  - 3. Creating a new capability for organizing and mobilizing volunteers in support of our various ministries**
  - 4. Obtaining additional management and administrative talent to insure that projects are completed and celebrated before new ones are undertaken**
  - 5. Staffing to levels which will support our future needs as a congregation of 400 weekly worshipers**
- B. That current Facilities limitations be addressed by**
  - 1. Finding interim solutions to the most pressing problems, such as inadequate space for child care during worship**
  - 2. Engaging in a building program to provide space to support the full range of activities of a vibrant congregation of 400 weekly worshipers**

**Note: We believe that pursuit of these Strategic Goals will also help us enhance two of our most treasured existing strengths:**

- A. That Advent Lutheran Church continue to be known as the place where lively yet meaningful worship takes place**
- B. That we continue to be known for our diversity, pressing to become even more inviting to the diverse population that surrounds us, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background or sexual orientation**