



COURSES &  
RESOURCES

### **Introduction**

Every church has a mission statement; many are beautifully worded and well-thought-out. However, these mission statements are written for a very specific audience – church members or people who are looking for a new church to join. To the wider community, especially your neighbors who aren't active in a church, church mission statements often sound obscure and exclusive. Every church needs to be able to talk about itself and what it cares about in a way that is accessible and inspiring to a diverse audience of community members, especially those neighbors with whom the church would like to work.

Finding an accessible way to talk about your church is even more important when you are seeking community partners to use your space. Everyone who uses your building will be associated with you, and vice versa – mission alignment is one of the most important factors for a successful and mutually beneficial space-sharing initiative. You should be able to see your church's values reflected in all the activities your building hosts, whether or not those are religious activities.

This activity will help your church council, staff or outreach team articulate key messaging points for talking about your congregation and facilities with a wide range of neighbors, leaders and stakeholders. This activity is meant to be conducted with clergy and lay leaders who have a good understanding of your congregation's sense of mission and who are or will be doing outreach to find more space users. Each part of the activity should take about 15 minutes, so budget about an hour for this discussion.

***This is not an activity to help you write a new mission statement!*** This is an activity to help you talk about your church with your neighbors and local stakeholders.

***Avoid religious language!*** We have an amazing vocabulary of faith, but not everyone has the same understanding of those words (or even knows what they mean). Finding different language can unlock creative ways to think and talk about our mission, vision and values.

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### **Part One: Your Mission**

Print out a copy of your mission statement for each participant. Read the statement aloud and use the following questions as a jumping-off point for discussion.

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- How does your mission statement make you stand out among different churches in the ELCA? In your community? What is *unique* about it?

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- How is your congregation living out its mission today? What programs/activities reflect this mission?

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- How is your building/property living out your mission? Which activities (church-led **or** community-led) enhance your mission?

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Note: Your church may have an old mission statement that your leaders are not very familiar with or one that everyone agrees needs to be rewritten. In that case, start off by asking each participant to describe their understanding of the congregation's mission.

Questions or other resource requests? Contact us at [CPRH@elca.org](mailto:CPRH@elca.org)



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**Identify three ways in which your church is living out its mission today**, either through an activity your congregation leads, an activity that a community organization leads in your facilities or an initiative that your congregation regularly participates in outside your property (e.g., a soup kitchen). Use action verbs (feeding, supporting, giving, etc.).

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Part Two: Your Vision**

Your congregation does excellent work, but what are you working **toward**? What are you hoping for? With your church's mission fresh in your minds, ask participants to describe the change your church hopes to see in your community (local, regional or however you define it). Take no longer than 15 minutes.

- What would be different?

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- Who would feel the change the most? How?

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- What would be done differently?

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- What would there be more of? Less of?

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**Complete this sentence: “We look forward to the day when ...,”** concluding with your hopes for your community. Think about your community particularly and be specific about the change you hope to see. For example, “when all our town’s children have food on their table” instead of “when everyone is fed.” You can make this a run-on sentence with two or three vision elements.

- We look forward to the day when ...

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### **Part Three: Your Values**

Values are the ideals we hold most dear, the ultimate “why” of what we do and how we do it. We can find shared values between people of different religious traditions, political affiliations, nationalities, ages and experiences.

**Identify three core values** of your church. Looking at the activities that reflect/enhance your mission and your hopes for your community, identify the values that underlie all this work. Remember, *don’t fall back on religious language* – try to articulate your values in just a couple of words that could resonate with folks who don’t have a faith tradition. You can refer to the extensive (but by no means comprehensive) list of values attached – this can be a good jumping-off point for the conversation.

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### **Part Four: Messaging Mad Libs**

Fill in this template with the values, mission-enhancing activities and vision statement your team has articulated.

\_\_\_\_\_ is committed to \_\_\_\_\_,  
(church name) (value 1) (value 2)

and \_\_\_\_\_. We live out these values through our work and  
(value 3)

partnerships: \_\_\_\_\_ and  
(mission activity 1) (mission activity 2)

\_\_\_\_\_. We look forward to the day when \_\_\_\_\_.  
(mission activity 3) (vision statement)

Once you've put it together, read it aloud and discuss it as a group. Answer the following questions for further reflection.

- What's missing from this message (besides religious language)? What would folks still not know about you?

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- What questions or ideas are surfacing for you?

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- How does this message clarify your church's identity and work? How might the community respond to this message?

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This is meant to be a starting point for how you message your church to the wider community – your neighbors, partners and advocates. You can always edit and rewrite it. You might choose to add this statement or a version of it to your website or social media page. Members and leaders who are involved in outreach and collaboration with community groups should be familiar with your core values.

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## Church Property Resource Hub - **Messaging your Mission**

### **Values Worksheet**

Based on your church programs, mission partnerships, congregational life and hopes for your neighbors, **circle five core values** that drive your church. Compare these values with others' to **identify three core values** for your community.

Accountability	Fairness	Opportunity
Adaptability	Fellowship	Optimism
Advocacy	Freedom	Outrage
Altruism	Fun	Peace
Authenticity	Generosity	Perseverance
Awareness	Grace	Positivity
Balance	Gratitude	Power
Beauty	Growth	Progress
Belonging	Harmony	Resourcefulness
Boldness	Healing	Respect
Bravery	Heritage	Responsibility
Certainty	Honesty	Risk-taking
Change	Hope	Ritual
Challenge	Humility	Safety
Charity	Humor	Self-discipline
Clarity	Identity	Self-expression
Collaboration	Imagination	Service
Commitment	Independence	Simplicity
Common sense	Indignation	Solidarity
Community	Initiative	Strength
Compassion	Integrity	Struggle
Connection	Intention	Teamwork
Continuity	Intervention	Tradition
Courage	Knowledge	Transformation
Creativity	Joy	Trust
Curiosity	Justice	Truth
Dedication	Leadership	Understanding
Education	Learning	Urgency
Empathy	Love	Well-being
Empowerment	Loyalty	Wisdom
Endurance	Nature	
Excellence	Need	
Exploration	Openness	

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