

CMC Mission Statement Congregational Check-in

Pre-Reading with Participant Questionnaire

January 2025

Thank you for your prayers and thoughtful contributions to CMC's mission statement. After reviewing the themes from listening sessions, surveys, and workshops, the Transition Team presented three mission statements for the Consistory's consideration. During their discussion, a fourth statement emerged. To ensure a thoughtful and well-informed decision, the Consistory is seeking input from the congregation. In January, congregants will discuss the statements in their small groups, with two open sessions available for those not in small groups or unable to attend.

Instructions: This document includes a questionnaire with the mission statements for your review and feedback. We strongly recommend reading all the provided information before assessing the mission statements. Once you complete the questionnaire, bring it to a small group discussion or an open session in January. These discussions will provide you with the opportunity to share your thoughts, update your ratings, or revise your comments.

As you review the potential mission statements, keep in mind that the intent of a mission statement is to reflect **Christ Memorial Church's unique purpose within the broader missional mandate of the universal Church**. Our mission statement will serve as a guide for living out the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

When considering whether the mission statement reflects our current state and/or anticipated future state, ask yourself: **Does it inspire us to take meaningful action during and beyond this season of "Congregational Redevelopment?"** This question aligns with our current position in the church Life Cycle, which was introduced at the recent Meal and Mission Workshop, summarized as follows.

Christ Memorial Church in context of the Life Cycles of a church.

At our Meal and Mission Workshop, we reviewed the natural life cycle stages of a church. MANY saw CMC strongly in each of three stages—Empty Nest, Retirement, and Old Age, with a few including aspects of Maturity as well. The largest cluster of responses puts CMC strongly in **Empty Nest AND in Retirement**. Through this identification, there was also recognition that our church requires "redevelopment" at this phase to find new life and vitality. For more information on the Life Cycle, reference the optional reading at the end of this document.

Congregational redevelopment is a process through which congregations facing significant challenges engage in a new or renewed spiritual strategic journey leading to congregational transformation. Congregations in need of redevelopment often recognize a growing gap between (1) the reality of their current life and ministry and (2) their full kingdom potential. **Though the substance of our basic mission really doesn't change, how we express it may need to change based on where our church finds itself at present. A fresh expression of God's mission for us is meant to inspire us to move from where we are to where God is calling us to be at this time in our life together.** The journey toward new life often begins with the courage to name some hard truths about where we are as a church. Then we can work together in a focused way to overcome the things that are keeping us from a healthy life in Christ:

- We lack a unifying mission and vision.
- Our relationships and natural fellowship have been deeply wounded by years of conflict, spanning several pastoral leaders.

- Disagreements and conflicts have led to the loss of many members, particularly younger individuals, and our good name has been tarnished in the community.
- While we still offer many good programs, visitors and younger members struggle to find a place where they truly belong. These programs lack alignment under a central, unifying vision.
- Our communication, management structures, and ability to adapt have been hindered by ongoing conflicts—we lack the elasticity to change without breaking.
- Worship remains the primary “glue” that holds us together, yet it is both a source of joy and a point of contention.

Jesus said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another . . . by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). If our relationships with each other and the world outside our doors have been harmed, it follows that, as a body, our relationship with God has also been damaged.

Therefore, redevelopment will be marked by three key mission points

- 1) **Strengthening our relationship with God** (Great commandment: Love God)
- 2) **Renewing our relationships with one another** (Great Commandment: Love others)
- 3) **Remembering our call to have a relationship with those outside our walls for the sake of Christ** (Great Commission: Go and make disciples)

These three mission points depend heavily on **GRACE**—accepting God’s grace and forgiveness for us as a church, showing grace with each other, and offering God’s grace to our neighbors. Through the discernment of a new shared mission – one that becomes the “golden thread that weaves through every idea, conversation, and action, no matter how small,” – we can begin on a new journey together toward health, unity and a new, vital life together!

A mission statement is our timeless purpose and reason for being, our compass that points us all in the same direction. Our mission is set for us in the Great Commandment and Great Commission and does not fundamentally change, though our expression of it may.

In summary as you move into the questionnaire, keep in mind the goal is for the statement to be a fresh expression of God’s mission for us. Evaluate the mission statement by asking yourself, is it:

- **Clear** – Is the language such that someone who does not attend church could understand?
- **Concise** – Can it be stated in one breath? Is it clearly stated in a few words?
- **Compelling** – Does it make people want to say it again because it is delightful to say and hear?
- **Catalytic** – Does it inherently encourage the speaker and listener to act, rather than define success as what professional ministers do?
- **Contextual** – Do the words communicate biblical truth for the listeners’ time and place?
- **Is it vertical and horizontal:** Does it call on us to deepen our relationships with Christ, with one another, and with the world beyond our walls?
- **Is it aspirational? Does it inspire us to take meaningful action** during and beyond this season of “Congregational Redevelopment?”

CONGREGATION-WIDE MISSION STATEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions using the guidance provided above. While you will have the opportunity to adjust your ratings and comments after the group discussion, we encourage you to complete this questionnaire in advance and come prepared to share your input during the meeting.

The scores will be averaged, and comments summarized into key themes, both of which will be presented to the Consistory on February 3. The chosen mission statement should ideally achieve a majority score of 4 or higher. Therefore, please rate each statement individually, not in comparison to one another. If strong alignment emerges around one statement, a congregational vote of affirmation will follow in February.

- A. Consider the phrase, “**Growing in Christ, Gracious in unity, Giving hope to all in Jesus’ name.**”
- a. What do each of the following statements mean to you?
 - i. **Growing** in Christ
 - ii. **Gracious** in unity
 - iii. **Giving** hope to all in Jesus’ name
 - b. If the middle phrase was “Gracious in our **differences**” instead of “Gracious in **unity**,” would you like the statement MORE ____ or LESS ____? Why?
 - c. If we adopted this mission statement and really lived into it, what do you think would change about CMC in the next three years?
 - d. Do you think it is clear, concise, compelling, catalytic, and contextual? Yes/No (Circle Yes or No)
 - e. Using a scale of 1-5, rate how well the mission statement, “**Growing in Christ, Gracious in unity, Giving hope to all in Jesus’ name**” (**Growing, Gracious, Giving**), reflects your understanding of CMC’s unique purpose. This statement:
 - 1 **Does not reflect** the purpose of CMC at all.
 - 2 **Reflects the purpose** of CMC to a minimal extent but **falls short in key areas**.
 - 3 **Neutral** – Neither aligns nor misaligns with the purpose of CMC.
 - 4 **Effectively reflects** the purpose of CMC, but **some areas can be improved**.
 - 5 **Fully and clearly reflects** the purpose of CMC.

Before group discussion: Record your score here: __

After group discussion: Record your final score here: __

If your score changed, briefly explain why:

- B. Consider the statement, “**Growing in Christ, Loving each other, Sharing the good news of Jesus.**”
- a. What do each of the following phrases mean to you?
 - i. **Growing** in Christ
 - ii. **Loving** each other
 - iii. **Sharing** the good news of Jesus
 - b. If we adopted this mission statement and really lived into it, what do you think would change about CMC in the next three years?
 - c. Do you think it is clear, concise, compelling, catalytic, and contextual? Yes/No (Circle Yes or No)
 - d. Using a scale of 1-5, rate how well the mission statement, “**Growing in Christ, Loving each other, Sharing the good news of Jesus**” (**Growing, Loving, Sharing**), reflects your understanding of CMC’s unique purpose. This statement:
 - 1 **Does not reflect** the purpose of CMC at all.
 - 2 **Reflects the purpose** of CMC to a minimal extent **but falls short in key areas.**
 - 3 **Neutral** – Neither aligns nor misaligns with the purpose of CMC.
 - 4 **Effectively reflects** the purpose of CMC, but **some areas can be improved.**
 - 5 **Fully and clearly reflects** the purpose of CMC.

Before group discussion: Record your score here: __

After group discussion: Record your final score here: __

If your score changed, briefly explain why:

- C. Consider the statement, “**Anchored in Christ, Authentic in community, Abounding in love.**”
- a. What do each of the following phrases mean to you?
 - i. **Anchored** in Christ
 - ii. **Authentic** in community
 - iii. **Abounding** in love
 - b. If we adopted this mission statement and really lived into it, what do you think would change about CMC in the next three years?
 - c. Do you think it is clear, concise, compelling, catalytic, and contextual? Yes/No (Circle Yes or No)

- d. Using a scale of 1-5, rate how well the mission statement, “**Anchored in Christ, Authentic in community, Abounding in love**” (**Anchored, Authentic, Abounding**), reflects your understanding of CMC’s unique purpose. This statement:
- 1 **Does not reflect** the purpose of CMC at all.
 - 2 **Reflects the purpose** of CMC to a minimal extent but **falls short in key areas**.
 - 3 **Neutral** – Neither aligns nor misaligns with the purpose of CMC.
 - 4 **Effectively reflects** the purpose of CMC, but **some areas can be improved**.
 - 5 **Fully and clearly reflects** the purpose of CMC.

Before group discussion: Record your score here: __

After group discussion: Record your final score here: __

If your score changed, briefly explain why:

D. Consider the statement, “**Rooted in Christ, Real in relationships, Reaching out to all in Jesus’ name.**”

- a. What do each of the following phrases mean to you?
- i. **Rooted** in Christ

 - ii. **Real** in relationships

 - iii. **Reaching** out to all in Jesus’ name
- b. If we adopted this mission statement and really lived into it, what do you think would change about CMC in the next three years?
- c. Do you think it is clear, concise, compelling, catalytic, and contextual? Yes/No (Circle Yes or No)
- d. Using a scale of 1-5, rate how well the mission statement, “**Rooted in Christ, Real in relationships, Reaching out to all in Jesus’ name**” (**Rooted, Real, Reaching**), reflects your understanding of CMC’s unique purpose. This statement:
- 1 **Does not reflect** the purpose of CMC at all.
 - 2 **Reflects the purpose** of CMC to a minimal extent but **falls short in key areas**.
 - 3 **Neutral** – Neither aligns nor misaligns with the purpose of CMC.
 - 4 **Effectively reflects** the purpose of CMC, but **some areas can be improved**.
 - 5 **Fully and clearly reflects** the purpose of CMC.

Before group discussion: Record your score here: __

After group discussion: Record your final score here: __

If your score changed, briefly explain why:

Next Steps

Thank you for joining us on our journey toward renewal! Scores will be averaged and shared with the Consistory on February 3. If strong alignment emerges around one statement, a congregational vote of affirmation will follow in February.

Once the mission statement is approved, the team will begin work on communication and launch, incorporating it into the existing CMC logo. The new mission statement will also guide annual planning efforts. Congregational members will be invited to share their perspectives on which aspects of the new mission statement require the most focus to help everyone embody its principles.

The team will continue preliminary work to define the accompanying vision and values and anticipate that finalization will occur after the arrival and engagement with our new Lead Pastor. If the plan progresses as outlined, a search team for a new Lead Pastor will be formed in March 2025.

Optional Reading: Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development from George Bullard
Directions were provided at the workshop in November: As you go through the various descriptions, underline things that resonate with you regarding CMC.

Maturity

The church has become more passive than active. It is still successful in many areas. For the most part it has a positive spirit. However, it is no longer focused. It is no longer clear about its vision. The success culture of the congregation keeps it moving forward. It is blind to the fact that it no longer has an empowering vision that is fueling it forward. The worship services, particularly the music, are still considered excellent. The congregation has several programs for which it is well known.

Empty Nest

Empty Nest is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is at first nostalgic, and later angry about the loss of the past. Ultimately the congregation will look for something or someone to blame for the situation in which they find themselves. During Empty Nest the programs begin to disintegrate. There is a feeling they must redouble efforts because attendance and giving are down, but the efforts produce lackluster results. The hope exists that tomorrow will bring a return of yesterday. Most of the dreams are of events of the past instead of visions of the future. The longer a congregation remains in Empty Nest, the more likely the nostalgia will turn to anger. When this happens, the barriers may not just be ones of aging, but also ones of dysfunction. Blaming becomes a popular topic of congregational fellowships. A layperson, a lay group, a staff person, or the pastor may become the focus of blaming. Empty Nest congregations tend to have the most severe conflict of any stage of development. In Empty Nest the conflict comes about as angry people clash, but do not necessarily leave the congregation in large numbers.

Side Note: The congregation in Empty Nest may telegraph its time focus by the age group it wants to target with the most efforts. Congregations who want to target *teenagers* want to focus on *yesterday*. Those who want to target *senior adults* want to focus on today. Finally, congregations who want to target *adults ages 25 to 45 and their children* want to focus on *tomorrow*.

Retirement

The key factor that sets in when a congregation is getting ready to move from Empty Nest to Retirement is private despair. Part of the despair may be weariness from the struggles of Empty Nest. Many long-term members and attendees decided at the end of Empty Nest that this is no longer a good place to invite people to come. As a result, they become hesitant in their ministry to lost, unchurched, de-churched, and hurting people. Simultaneously they want the congregation to be alive and vital long enough to help them with various life passages, including their own death. Retirement begins to emerge when these same people

begin to express excitement about making another major effort to turn around the congregation. They look forward to revitalized and new programs that a newer, younger pastor, and the new members that they can attract. It is clear something must be done, so change, transitions, and new ideas are said to be welcomed and supported. The stakeholders really do not realize what they have asked for. They want the congregation to experience qualitative and quantitative growth that is congruent with the patterns of the past. They do not realize that the necessary changes will probably result in forms and styles very different from the past. Simultaneously, the new pastor, and the newer, younger members and attendees hear what they want to hear. About 18 to 24 months into the changes initiated by newer, younger leaders, the stakeholders may realize that things are not working the way they thought they would. If so, they seek to stop the change efforts, and—if necessary—get rid of or discourage the leaders of the changes. Retirement congregations may actually split when this happens. Whether the stakeholders leave, or the newer, younger leaders leave depends on how successful the changes have been, and for how long the change efforts have taken place.

Old Age

Old Age is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is functioning on fumes rather than being fueled by vision. A congregation in the previous stage (retirement) is like a truck without four-wheel drive stuck in mud to its axles, and it cannot get out without help. At some point the congregation gives up hope or runs out of resources to mount a change and transition effort. Rather than give permission for a new round of programmatic efforts to redevelop the congregation, they give up. When this happens the congregation slips quietly into Old Age. The habit or pattern of gathering for worship and fellowship is the primary factor keeping the congregation going. Worship life is full of precious memories. There is a fear of "who we are" being swallowed up. So the congregation is afraid to take any risks that might diminish the precious few resources it has left. There are many more funerals than baptisms, and the number of people who are homebound or in the nursing section of senior adult housing put a strain on care ministries. If the congregation moved to Old Age following a conflict, which may have included a split in the fellowship, then it carries a lot of bitterness into this stage.

At our Workshop, members found things that resonate in each of the stage with the strongest identification in Empty Nest→Retirement.