

A Vision for the LCMS

Fifty years ago, in a decade of great cultural upheaval, the LCMS was near its pinnacle. Since that time the LCMS has joined other mainline denominations in the United States and declined in virtually all categories including membership, worship attendance, and baptisms.

A denomination is simply a gathering of its congregations, however. So what if instead of bemoaning the shrinking of our collective organization and pointing fingers at diminishing birth rates, we ignited and encouraged those individual congregations poised to lead missionally in their communities? What if we poured gas on every mission ember we could find?

What if we recognized that the nation in which we live has become a Hindu nation, full of people following multiple gods and goddesses, with most of our congregations watching from the edge of the culture? How would that reality change our work and worship?

What if we allowed the presence of Jesus, given by His Word, and by that same Word in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, to open our eyes to His presence in creation and in us? What if our faith in His presence led us to see every moment of every day as an opportunity to be about His work, bringing Him especially to His lost people?

What if our congregations started loving and praying for their communities instead of being afraid of their communities? What if our fear and anger over the moral changes happening around us were replaced with love and physical ministry to the broken on our block?

What if we realized Jesus turns the impure into pure so we don't have to keep the impure at bay?

What if rather than clergy-doing, we became clergy-equipping? What if instead of trying to accentuate and highlight the difference between clergy and laity, we instead elevated the giftedness and calling of laity in vocation and ministry? What if we clergy lived in the background rather than the forefront?

What if we celebrated rather than denigrated? What if we built up instead of tore down? What if we blessed instead of cursed? What if we trusted each other rather than attacked and stabbed and belittled?

What if instead of talking about Lutheran identity we Lutherans became synonymous with a love for Jesus, His Word of Law and Gospel, His means of grace, and His

people, especially His lost people? What if our Confessions were loved but not worshiped, more explanatory than inflammatory?

What if all of these ‘what if’s’ became reality? How would that change your congregation? How would that change our denomination? Would it still be here for our grandchildren’s grandchildren?

We at FiveTwo believe there is always a way forward that refocuses us for kingdom impact, and resurgence. Below are Five Strategic Pillars on which to build a better future. We welcome your thoughts and discussion as together we carry out the Great Commission in the US.

Five Strategic Pillars

1. The USA becomes THE #1 mission field.

- Dollars and energy redirected into US mission endeavors.
- StartNew and baptism goals are set in every District.
- Every congregation is challenged to start a new ministry specifically designed to reach lost people in its community.
- Men and women with apostolic and evangelistic gifts are identified, celebrated and encouraged to start new expressions of the Gospel.
- A renewed and intense focus on the LCMS remaining in the cities and urban areas.

2. An emphasis on equipping and empowering the laity.

- Jesus as Lord & Savior, professional church workers as equippers & servants, and laity as ministers.
- Flexibility in how the work of the Pastoral Office is carried out, under the authority of the Office but not necessarily by the pastor.
- Entrusting congregations to utilize the laity in their midst as they deem necessary to carry out local ministry.
- Highlighting laity at work becomes a priority in all synodical communications.
- Enlisting entrepreneurial-minded laity to launch a variety of ministries, non-profits, and kingdom businesses.

3. Create a culture of celebration and thanksgiving for diversity instead of a culture of fear and anger.

- High trust and support for local leaders as they seek to lead in a post-modern culture.
- Celebrate and embrace both ethnic and cultural diversity.

- Our congregations demonstrate a variety of ministry practices in order to reach the diverse peoples in their communities.
- Freedom to worship in a language and expression that best fits the neighborhood, bringing our ancient faith into a modern setting.
- Adopting a redeeming mindset instead of an attacking mindset when it comes to culture.

4. Synodical leaders whose function is to identify and network rather than control and create.

- Minimal staff, geared around encouraging, connecting and elevating.
- Refocused website that consolidates resources from congregations across synod.
- Identifying congregations, RSOs and auxiliary organizations who are demonstrating effectiveness in their areas, and then utilizing them as teaching and equipping arms of the synod.
- Transform Concordia Publishing House into an internet-savvy, global-market leader that meets the needs of the congregations of the LCMS and the Church-at-large.
- Districts and circuits that become centers of encouragement and support especially for pastors and laity in mission/entrepreneurial work.

5. Entrusting leadership to Millennials.

- A demonstrated willingness to raise up and hand off the ministry to the next generation.
- Enlisting the millennial generation — the largest and most entrepreneurial on record — to start and lead a variety of new ministries.
- More effectively utilizing the National Youth Gathering to mobilize our youth.
- A wholesale overhaul of our ministry on college campuses, adopting practices the greater Church has found effective in reaching this generation.
- Flexible systems that provide theological education at our colleges and seminaries through both non-residential and residential methods.