

Central States Synod – Vision and Mission Statement Visioning Team Recommendation – December 2020

Central States Synod Mission: **United with Christ in Baptism. Traveling the way of Jesus. Joining God’s reign of justice and radical love in the world.**

Background

- 1) The Central States Synod consists of two states joined together as a synod simply on the basis of geography with rural/urban areas; plains of western KS/Lake of the Ozarks; small towns/larger urban areas; few larger congregations/many small congregations. The challenge has been to see what connects the congregations and ministries of the synod. How do we “walk together” (meaning of the word “synod”) in our different contexts?
- 2) We have been in the midst of a pandemic for the last several months which has disrupted normal ways of being church and will remain in a state of uncertainty well into next year. What have we seen during this “liminal” time between what was and what will be?
 - a) The importance of understanding and experience faith as a deep relationship with God through Christ, giving hope, patience, wisdom, and compassion and binding us to one another and to the world even when we are not physically present with one another.
 - b) The deep divides and fissures in our society along racial lines and economic inequality, revealing the vulnerability of those on the margins.

Vision

The Central States Synod would be a place that:

- Witnesses to the centrality of faith as individuals and communities embrace and actively live the way of Jesus.
- Empowers ministries and congregations to participate in God’s reign of justice, loving neighbor through acts of charity and the work of advocacy.
- Nurtures engagement in spiritual practices that deepened faith and courageous acts of love for the neighbor.
- Invites others into this transforming way of Jesus.

Mission

United with Christ in Baptism. Traveling the way of Jesus. Joining God’s reign of justice and radical love in the world.

- 1) United with Christ – In the waters of our baptism, we are united to Christ **and** to one another. This is the reality and truth which continually transforms us and is the defining lens for our actions and behaviors.
- 2) Traveling the way of Jesus – The way of Jesus is not a static concept we are invited to affirm, but an active way of living and moving into and through this world. Traveling this way invites us even deeper into a love of God and love of neighbor.

- 3) Joining God's reign of justice and radical love in the world – God's reign has broken into our world calling us beyond acts of charity to justice for our neighbor to participate in God's radical love which challenges the status quo to bring about reconciliation and a new way of being.

Core Values – how they will help shape the mission

1) Worship

- a. Developing new rituals, practices, and medias, both for individuals and communities, that incarnate the way of Jesus within AND beyond the walls of our church buildings.
- b. Worship is not just about us but a way to evangelize, and share the good news of Jesus with others

2) Community

- a. Relationship with Jesus is never just individual but always brings us into community as the body of Christ where incarnational care and love is experienced
- b. Diversity is welcomed, respected, and nurtured to have a richer experience of Christ as well as the opportunity to listen to the needs of others (Racial Justice Team)

3) Love of Neighbor

- a. Addressing the specific needs of the most vulnerable – acts of charity (engaged more actively in response to community needs)
- b. Doing advocacy work – addressing love of neighbor on a society, systemic level (KIFA, Justice Matters, Missouri Faith Voices)

4) Giving and Generosity

- a. Activating disciples of Jesus who trust the abundance of God and connect their giving with living the way of Jesus
- b. Activate stewards who care for others as well as creation (Lutherans Restoring Creation)

Priorities of Synod Work to further the Mission of the Synod

- 1) Leadership – raising up, training and supporting leaders who can address the anxiety in a changing system, invite individuals and communities into a deeper relationship with Jesus, and challenge them to develop ministries, actions, and systems that engage in the work of God's mission of radical love
- 2) Communication – sharing stories and resources that inspire, challenge, and invite the synod into the Jesus way and to reach out in mission in their communities
- 3) Collaboration & Connection – helping individuals and congregations work with one another to more deeply connect with and participate in God's reign of justice