

Confessing the Faith, Laying Foundations, Planting Seeds

Updated January 13, 2024.

OVERVIEW

Redeemer Lutheran’s Mission Statement: To receive God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament, to worship Him, to grow in His grace, and to share those Holy gifts, making disciples of Christ who reach out joyfully to the world around them.

Serving the Lord in the community of Huntington Beach since 1963, we continue to be strengthened by Word and Sacrament to reach out joyfully in faith, and make disciples together.

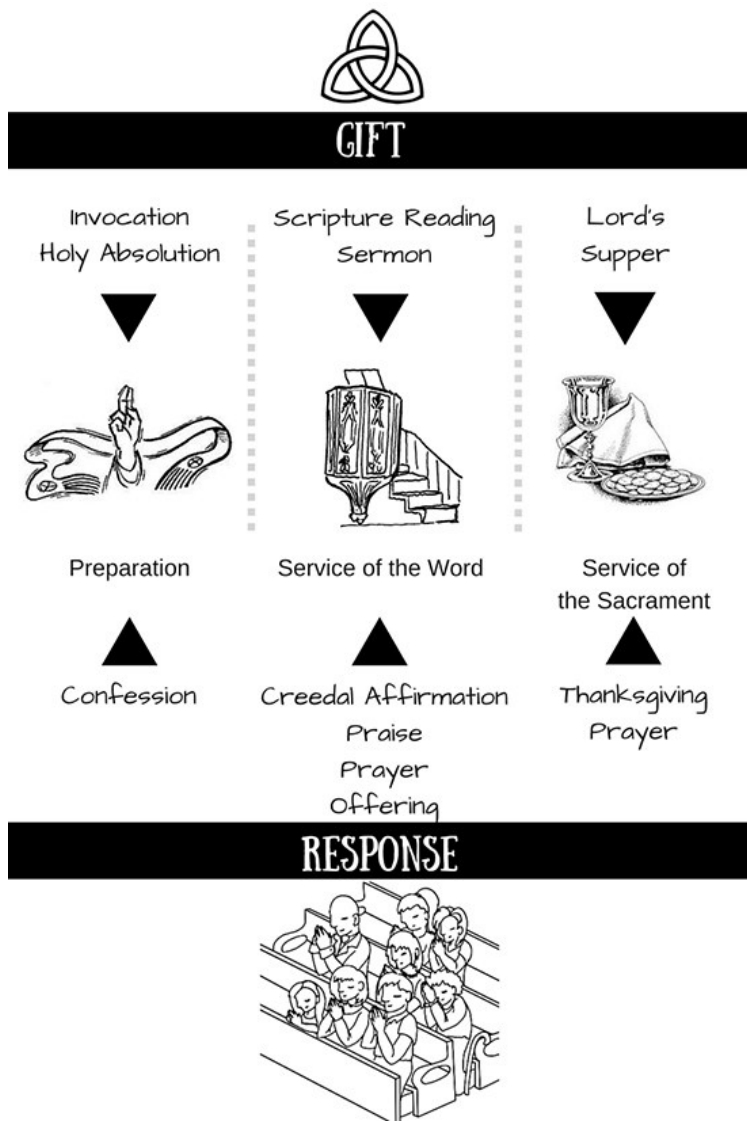
There is a rhythm to our Christian life, a divine dialogue where God speaks and we respond. Gift and Response. God gives us his forgiveness, life, and salvation in Word and Sacrament; and we respond in thanks and praise. Gift and response. This is the language of the Christian faith, as illustrated in the picture to the right.

Our life together at Redeemer Lutheran Church is no different. Gift and Response. God loves us. We love others. God gives us eternal life. We respond in our life with thanks, praise, offerings, and our lives of stewardship. God serves us, we serve our neighbor in Christian love and humility – all sustained by God’s grace in Word and Sacrament.

God has richly blessed our congregation. And, now by his grace, we look for ways to share these blessings with others in our congregation and community this coming year. In order to facilitate this, the pastors and elders have been hard at work outlining what we’re about here at Redeemer Lutheran. And we’ve come up with the following three headings that fit our mission statement above: Confessing the Faith, Laying Foundations, Planting Seeds. After each section you will find a number of goals (short and long term) that will guide us in keeping with Christ’s call to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20) and equip the saints for service in love (Ephesians 4).

Please take the time to read the following priorities and goals for the upcoming year, pray for our life together in Christ, and look for opportunities to serve our congregation and surrounding community in the coming year.

It is a joy to serve among you as pastor, receiving His gifts and serving our neighbor. - Pastor Tom Miller



Confessing the Faith

Fundamentals of the Christian Faith

1. **Divine Service is where Christ Serves** us with his **Divine** gifts every Sunday. God's Word, Baptism, the Absolution, and The Lord's Supper are God's gifts that make up Divine Service. This is the heart of our life in Christ. Everything we do and say at Redeemer leads us to Christ's gifts of Word and Sacrament, or flows from it. We see this happening already in the early church in Acts 2:42. Our love and service to our neighbor begins at the altar and goes out from there. This is why **receiving Jesus' Word and Sacrament is a priority here at Redeemer.**
2. **Holy Baptism.** This is not only the gift of salvation we receive on the day of our Baptism it is our life long, eternal gift. We say, "I am baptized", instead of "I was baptized". This shapes our vocation, teaching, life together, witness, etc., in other words, everything we say and do is founded also upon Baptism, *which washes away our sin and adopts us into God's family as His beloved children.*
3. **Know What We Believe and Why We Believe It.** Our life together within the congregation, and our outreach in the community depend upon this. We must be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within us when asked (1 Peter 3:15). **Declare and Defend classes** are one of the ongoing means to achieve this goal. We will continue to offer these, as well as other opportunities in the near future. This is also the purpose of our regularly offered bible classes on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. **Studying God's Word is to be a priority for all members at Redeemer.**
4. **What is the Church?** In Luther's Large Catechism he gives us a brief definition of the Church:
Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered to the end that we shall daily obtain there nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here...

As Scripture teaches us, the Church is a communion of saints, a fellowship in Christ's body, Christ's bride, a house of living stones, a flock, and so forth. This is our identity as members of the body of Christ. Knowing this, shapes how we live and act in our daily lives inside and outside these walls. This is why **gathering together as Christ's people around Word and Sacrament is a priority at Redeemer (Hebrews 10:23-25).**
5. **What is the calling (i.e. vocation) of Pastor and People in the Church?** The office of pastor is one of servant and messenger. Being a messenger of God's Word is also the vocation (calling) of every Christian, wherever we live and spend time in our daily life. This is what we call "joining Jesus on His mission." *Word and Sacrament Ministry and making disciples are to be priorities for the pastor and people at Redeemer.* For more Scripture on the office of pastor see Titus 1 and 2; 1 and 2 Timothy; and Corinthians 4:1-2.
6. **Our life together in the congregation is one of mutual trust.** The devil loves to create chaos in the church by driving wedges between pastor and people, and people and pastor, and people and people. If you have an issue for the pastor or someone else, set up a meeting with that person and/or the pastor. Remember Matthew 18. **Clear Communication is to be a priority at Redeemer.**

7. **How do we live a life of Good Works? (i.e. sanctification).** Consider the words of Martin Luther's explanation of the 3rd article of the Apostles' Creed:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.

See also Ephesians 2:8-10. Good works are also a gift from God, just like our salvation. Live in your Baptism! Be who you are called to be in Christ! This means that the calling in our congregation for pastor, leaders, and all members is one of humility, service, compassion, and sowing seeds of the Gospel (See Matthew 13). Therefore, **living in response to God's love is to be a priority for each of us at Redeemer.**

Confessing the Faith Goals for 2024-2025:

1. **Continuing and expanding a regularly scheduled midweek service** (in addition Advent and Lenten Wednesday Services). Brief "times off" are observed after Christmas, Easter and in the Summer for respite for Pastor and those assisting
2. **Declare and Defend evangelism training seminar.** This Saturday morning breakfast seminar continues to serve us in equipping the saints and teaching us practical tools for speaking the Gospel to others in our daily lives. *We will continue hosting this on a regular basis through 1517.org and through Pastors Toma, Jasa, Pierson, and Nader.*
3. **Host a Monthly breakfast bible class.** This monthly gathering includes a variety of topics and speakers, as we equip the saints, teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. In this past year we have had a live-streamed and/or Zoom dimension added to the in-person event. We've had an excellent turn out for our guest speakers, and look for more in 2023-2024.

Laying Foundations

(for the present and future)

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:1-5

In Ezra and Nehemiah, before the temple or the walls were rebuilt, the worship life of Word and Sacrament was renewed. Secondly, the Word of God was studied more intentionally and publicly among the people. For Israel, everything flowed from God's saving gifts and presence in the temple.

Our life in Christ at Redeemer is the same. Everything we say and do flows from and leads to the place where Christ gives us his Word and Sacrament in water, word, body, and blood.

Therefore, in the coming year, Redeemer will continue to look for ways to increase our understanding, support, and participation of God's calling to *be strengthened by Word and Sacrament to reach out joyfully in faith, and make disciples together* in the following areas:

1. **Prayer and Study of God's Word.** Attending services and Bible studies is vital and indispensable to receiving God's promises, our growth in the Christian faith, and our work in mission and outreach. Hearing God's Word together, responding to God's Word and Sacrament with prayer, thanks, and our offerings, praying together, kneeling at the Communion rail together, sharing joys and burdens of our neighbor together. This is the life of the congregation under the grace of God. Therefore, **it will be a priority of each congregation leader to attend weekly services and studies.** We continue to encourage additional opportunities for Bible studies through our Pastors, *Elders*, rostered workers, and other capable members of the congregation.
2. **Understanding Scripture's teaching on Vocation.** Vocation means calling. Our first calling is faith in Christ in Baptism. Second, our calling in the Christian life takes place where we live and work: home, church, and our community. How do we serve God in each of these areas? What are we called to do in each place, context? Vocation is where each of us are evangelists, speaking the Gospel and showing compassion to those we come in contact with each day. **It will be a priority to teach the Scriptural doctrine of Vocation at Redeemer so we can better understand and grow in our life of love and service.**
3. **Stewardship.** Stewardship is an important part of our mission statement: "Clear Witness + Caring Service – Together". Through God's gifts of stewardship, we are able to fund the work of the Gospel, provide people with opportunities to serve, and connect the needs of our congregation and community with the gifts and skills God has given each of us. The old adage of "time, treasure, and talents" is certainly true when it comes to stewardship. However, we need to see stewardship as more than those three words, and rather as a part of our life in Christ as fruit is to an apple tree. **It is a matter of God's Love, our response.**

4. Plans for Ministry Staffing:

- a. We are in the process of calling a new senior pastor (and pastor of souls).
- b. Pastor Tom Miller is called as a part-time, ordained pastor. In this capacity, he is serving as the vacancy pastor in preaching, liturgy, outreach, staff development, and other pastoral responsibilities;
- c. Elders are encouraged to call their assigned members, stay informed of their needs, and visit them in times of need.
- d. Other help is still needed in order to properly care for the Redeemer flock and to continue the Gospel outreach to the community beyond our walls. Some strategies are: 1) Using rostered/Concordia trained lay people for Bible Studies; 2) Training the congregation to do outreach and discipling as part of their vocations (Joining Jesus on His Mission); 3) training and empowering Elders to do more of these tasks, and 4) seeking the assistance of pre-seminary students from CUI (a circuit 10 & 12 goal as well).

5. **Mercy/care for members.** (i.e. member visitation, member assistance, pastoral care, etc.). God calls us to “Caring Service” at Redeemer Lutheran. A great strength of this congregation continues to be the personal level of care that the pastors, elders, and members are able to extend to one another. **Caring for our members in body and soul is to be a priority of the pastor, vicar, elders, and all members** (see item 4 above).

6. **Mercy / care for community** (homeless, poor, etc.). In Huntington Beach there is an urgent need for homeless care. And this is an area where Redeemer can be a salt and light in our community. We changed our policy by discontinuing the distribution of food bags according to recommendations from the HB Police Homelessness Task Force. We also changed our bus pass distribution policy so that anyone who wants a bus pass must provide documentation of appropriate use in order to receive a second bus pass, thus allowing us to better use our resources for those who are in need. We also have established a list of resource providers for homeless services.

- a. Participation in Christian partnerships allows us to better address these needs by working together and pooling resources. **Beginning in 2017**, seven churches have participated in regular meetings focused on these issues and coordinated by Pastor Toma (North HB Churches: Redeemer, Grace, UMC, St. Peter’s Presbyterian, St. Bonaventure, LDS, and Calvary Refuge). **The last meeting September, 2022. The need for frequent meetings was reduced due to the development of the Huntington Beach comprehensive homeless services program.**
- b. Hosting meeting places for Al Anon, Boy Scouts, and the Japanese Sewing Circle is a service to the community and increases its visibility in the community as well.
- c. **A fund for a Lutheran Emergency Response Team trailer for community preparedness has been established; we are looking for someone to lead the implementation of this effort; to date we have not found a suitable volunteer; we should consider reallocating these funds.**

7. **Community visibility / presence** is an important part of being known and active in our community. Please share any ideas or experience you may have with pastors, the elders, or the Board of Evangelism. The following list is by no means exhaustive. These are simply ideas to get us started.

- a. Presence at community events / forums.
 - b. Preschool
 - c. Free ads in newspapers and community bulletin boards and public service media.
 - d. Social media, especially Nextdoor.com.
 - e. Continue use of our facility for Boy Scouts, Sewing Group, Al Anon, as much as possible without impeding on Redeemer programs.
8. **Facilities.** Facilities should support God’s work of receiving the Gospel in Word and Sacrament and responding with thanks and praise by spreading that Word in our community. In order to carry out the work that our Lord has called us to do here at Redeemer (*be strengthened by Word and Sacrament to reach out joyfully in faith, and make disciples together*). Our church and school need facilities that do not hinder, but support the work of the Gospel. This means that we are called to be good stewards of what we already have, making the most and best of what God has given us and caring for our current facilities while at the same time planning for the future as the building fund continues to grow. When the building fund was started it was given the name “Forward in Faith”, and that’s exactly what we’re called to do when it comes to facilities here at Redeemer as we continue to care for and renew our existing facilities in the most economical ways possible. **A wish list of improvements in the kitchen area has been created with estimates for each component. The Elders (and Board of Trustees) will offer input on priorities and feasibility.**
9. **Campus Safety.** We have formed a committee for safety that is tasked with looking out for ways to improve our security and attempt to mitigate any risk. We need to continue to move forward with training and evaluation of our security and safety risks.
- a. The installation of a door security/video system on the church entrances has been accomplished.
 - b. **Digital training resources provided through Church Mutual (CongregationU) on church safety and other workplace issues are now ready and being used.**

Laying the Foundation Goals for 2024-2025:

1. **Redeemer will have periodic communication on stewardship in our bulletins and newsletters. The Stewardship Committee will work with the financial secretary to help provide those communications.**
2. **Identify members interested in having family in-home bible classes (e.g. Joining Jesus as a Family) and facilitate necessary materials and support for their success.**
3. **The church safety committee has implemented the goals set to provide present and ongoing safety measures for our church and school.**
4. **For every hour spent in a board or committee meeting our leaders should be involved in one hour of Bible study at Redeemer’s bible class or an in-home bible class. (incorporate reminders in bulletins and newsletters).**

Planting Gospel Seeds: Outreach and Evangelism at Redeemer

*“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11*

1. **Lead with our strengths.** Redeemer is blessed with many opportunities for “Clear Witness and Caring Service” in many ways. When it comes to our ongoing work of speaking the Gospel and sowing these seeds in our community, we begin with those areas which are strengths. As I see it, here are several areas in which we have a good history and potential for continued faithfulness in making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20).
 - a. Christian education of all ages.
 - b. Music for all ages, both in the various choirs, Sunday School, and Preschool.
 - c. Our preschool and the families we have the opportunity to witness to and care for.
 - d. Mercy work on an individual and congregational level.

Goal: Each member pray and think about where you can be involved in any of the areas listed above. Think and pray about other strengths God has given Redeemer Lutheran that can be shared with our community (incorporate in bulletins and newsletters).

2. **Pray for the Church daily.** Thankfully the future of the church isn't in our hands. It's in Christ's. The hands pierced for us...the future of the church isn't found in the visions and plans of men but in the promises of God and in the plans he works through us. 1 Corinthians 12:12ff - *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. Make the work of the Gospel here at Redeemer a part of your daily prayers (incorporate in bulletins and newsletters).*
3. **Why Do You proclaim the Gospel to others?** This coming year, I would like each of us to think about this question: Why do you want people to come to Redeemer Lutheran? How you answer this question, is a good place to start when inviting our neighbors and friends to come and see. The deeper our faith grows in and receives God's Word and Sacraments, the more we respond in our daily life with the fruits of faith (**Joining Jesus on His Mission, if you missed the Adult Bible Class – read the book**).
4. **Vocation (i.e. our daily callings in all of life)** is where each of us is in a mission field every day. You are each on the front lines daily with people of all kinds of religious beliefs. We have God's Word of life they so desperately need. Look for opportunities in your vocation to share the gospel and show care for those in need. Look for more studies on this in the coming year.

5. **How can we possibly do all these things? It all seems overwhelming.** Take heart. Be of good cheer. Do not be afraid. Our Lord has promised to be with us always. And he has left us everything we need: his Word, Baptism, Forgiveness, and Lord's Supper. He has blessed us with the resources and people to be a blessing to others as well. Therefore, let us love others as Christ has first loved us.

Remember the encouraging words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3: *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.* ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

Planting Seeds Goals for 2024-2025:

1. **Sunday Morning Bible Studies now incorporate practical application of Evangelism (Joining Jesus on His Mission) in a short session called Take 10. This is led by Karen Miller under the supervision of Pastor Tom.**
2. Bible studies and resources on Christian vocation and how that relates to evangelism, stewardship, and our Christian life of mercy will be made available to members via our library and literature displays using CPH, LHM and other sources (especially in relation to Campus Ministry, Ethnic Ministry and Lutherans for Life).
3. *Continue the Saturday morning Community Breakfast and Bible Studies utilizing resources from 1517.org, CMC, and PSD resources.*
4. *Continue and increase the integration of the church and preschool through staff Bible studies, Day School Sundays, and Chapel services.*
5. *Continue and expand the women's Bible Study. Karen Miller, who is a Concordia trained and rostered teacher, has begun monthly women's Bible studies which have been well received. We want to continue and increase the frequency and variety of such opportunities.*
6. *Quarterly prayer vigils at Redeemer are being organized under Karen Miller's leadership.*
7. *Continue our support for and partnership with Salam Ministries. Pastor Nader Hanna has begun organizing Bible Studies, training seminars, fellowship gatherings, and service efforts among immigrant communities in Southern California. Updates are provided monthly to our Redeemer News.*
8. **We are currently looking for new missionary family to support, replacing the McDermott Family, who have retired from service with LCMS.**