

**The Mission and Vision of
Trinity United Church of Christ
2006**

Our Statement of Mission

We continue the ministry of Jesus Christ and embrace God's presence and will, offering our lives to others.

Scriptural and Faith Affirmations

Mark 1:14-15: The time has come, the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the Good news.

Mark 8:34: If anyone would come after me, let that person deny themselves take up their cross and follow me.

Mark 10:43b-45: Whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The Kingdom of God and the Ministry of Jesus

The Ministry of Jesus Christ was one that began with the proclamation of the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God, a time or dimension in which God's will and presence are complete and clear to all. In the life of Jesus, both in his very existence (word made flesh, God made human) and in his conduct, (obedient to God's purposes, even to death. See Phil 2:5-10), we are able to discern the shape and substance of this Kingdom. It is not a kingdom as the world defines it, but of heart and mind and spirit, transcending the kingdoms or empires of this world. Yet the Kingdom does have substance in this world.

The substance of the kingdom is seen in the signs of the kingdom as proclaimed in the life and teaching of Jesus:

- Forgiveness and reconciliation: Luke 15:11-32
- Justice for the oppressed: Luke 4:16-21; Matthew 25:31-46
- Healing: Mark 2
- Including the disenfranchised in the People of God: Matthew 15:21-28
- Salvation by grace through faith: John 3:16
- Confronting the powers of religion, sin, evil and ignorance: Mark 11:15-19
- Teaching: Matthew 5, 6, 7
- Experiencing joy through redemptive self giving: Heb. 12:2
- Offering Unconditional Love (Matthew 5:46-48)
- Unity in Christ among diverse peoples: Mark 3:16-19
- Addressing the needs of the poor: Matthew 25:31-46

In his ministry, Jesus Christ **announced** the Kingdom of God, **demonstrated** it in acts of healing and compassion, **taught** about its meaning and implications for human life and **presented himself** as the entry way to God's dream for humanity and creation. In parables, Jesus teaches that it is in each person's self-interest to receive the Kingdom and to participate in it. (Mark 4:1-9).

If our congregation is going to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ, we will also identify ways to present the Good News of the Kingdom of God by:

Announcing that the Kingdom is evident in our personal and corporate life, through worship, preaching, fellowship and hospitality;

Demonstrating its reality and relevance through ministries of healing, reconciliation and compassion;

Teaching in word and deed, about how the Kingdom of God can be received by individuals, families and communities;

Witnessing in all aspects of the congregation's life to the centrality of Jesus Christ and the "surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:8)

Inviting and encouraging individuals, families and communities to move from self living to self giving;

Preparing ourselves to welcome those who Jesus would receive even if they have been marginalized by our society and community. The paradigm for ministering with such people can be in the story of Zacchaeus.

The Way of Discipleship

Through our baptism we are bonded to Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God and to living a life like his. The baptized are given specific gifts of the Holy Spirit so that each may take up a particular and peculiar feature of Christ's ministry. As his disciples, we seek out opportunities to use those gifts to continue the ministry of Jesus in our own lives, in our congregation, in the community and the world.

It is through the offering of our lives to others that we discover the joy of living that Christ promised. We meet Christ in the face of our neighbor. We complete our spiritual journeys in community with all of God's people. This is how we learn to live fully in the Kingdom of God.

The core Christian experience then, is a pilgrimage from *self living* (self idolatry and life in the world) to *self giving* (Christ-likeness and life in the Kingdom), trusting in God's care and direction. This pilgrimage is seen in signs such as

- A participation in the life of the church beyond worship to some involvement or investment in a mission of one's own.
- Sharing one's financial resources proportionately and sacrificially.
- Developing a life of active prayer and meditation.
- Engaging in the study of God's Word, of the "Mission Fields" (see below), and of how to hone one's spiritual gifts for mission;
- Holding one's self accountable to the shape and substance of Jesus' teaching and ministry.

The ministries of the congregation will finally be assessed based on the signs of this movement seen in our personal and corporate lives. As this movement takes place, we will call and equip disciples for redemptive service.

Our Vision for Outreach

The congregation will most effectively give witness to the Kingdom of God and continue the ministry of Jesus Christ if it selects 2-3 distinct mission fields around which to craft its message and focus its resources. A mission field is to be understood as: *An arena for work (action) and witness (evangelism)*. In other words, it would address the hurts or hopes of people with whom we can both work for some betterment and invite into the Church of Jesus Christ. This applies not only to those in a mission field, but to all members of TUC. Our churches often engage in external mission endeavors, many of which are clergy driven. We must also care for what is going on internally in the life of our congregation or when a pastor leaves, the good things will be sabotaged by those left behind who have not ministered to. We must meet needs and expectations of those within TUC and then we will have an easier time getting them to move beyond the needs of our own congregation.

- Would present a unity between the vision and vision path of Trinity UCC and its gifts and resources.
- Present the opportunity for building relationships and offering personal, hands on ministry.

- Present the opportunity for local, regional and global outreach.

Three groups of people that would meet these criteria now are:

Families of all kinds. Traditional families are most prevalent in Stark County, constituting 49% of all households, but are under represented at Trinity. Non traditional families constitute 15% of households in Stark County and may be receptive to ministry with TUCC (31% of households are People Living Alone, 5% are “Others”). Families, both parents, and children, can be caught in society’s endorsement of a self absorbed style of life. There are family issues to be addressed locally, regionally and globally.

Young People 20-34. People are marrying later and later, staying in their parent’s homes longer and returning there more often. How do we help these people find meaning in Jesus Christ and begin their own pilgrimage? This group presents us with connections to economic issues both local and global, as well as purpose of life issues. The group numbers about 66,000 in Stark County.

Disillusioned or disaffected Christians. Many people who were once active in congregations are no longer. Some have lost connection relationally. Others no longer find worship, education, services, meaningful or appropriately spiritually grounded. Still others have been turned away from congregations because of their appearance, orientation, or opinions. This is true for our own congregation as well as others. Nearly 66% of people in the Percept Study Area are either not involved with their faith or only somewhat involved. This phenomenon is seen in all Western countries. Percept is a research service that combines census data with extensive interviewing to provide information to churches. The Ohio Conference and Eastern Ohio Association funded our congregation’s access to this information.

As Trinity seeks to do effective ministry with and for these or other groups we will need to learn to do mission research, identifying such things as:

- What are the needs of these communities or groups?
- What gifts do we have to share?
- What can we do?

Our Vision for In-reach

The congregation will give witness to the Kingdom of God by addressing its own “inward” spiritual realities. We will seek to deepen the experience of Christ’s life in the Kingdom of God through nurturing a spirituality that is distinctly one that focuses on God’s mission for the church and for his purpose for our lives. Our spirituality needs to connect with the fulfillment of the Mission Statement in both our personal and corporate lives. Continuing the ministry of Jesus assumes we will learn to be “little Christs,” giving our lives to others as Jesus did. This assumes a level of maturity that delays one’s own gratification for the benefit of another. Every aspect of life at Trinity can contribute to this maturation process.

Worship will be

- A Celebration of God’s love for the world and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; it will seek a blend of heart, hand and head.
- Intergenerational in culture, reflecting the songs, symbols, and dress codes of the various generations in the community.
- Holy, providing an experience of God through the use of a wide variety of arts, personal encounters, witnessing, preaching, drama, symbolism and a variety of paradigms of worship.
- Reflect the real life experience of the congregation and the community at large.

- Grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, both affirming and challenging persons in the language and intent of the Kingdom of God.

Spiritual Growth

Education and spiritual nurture will become focused on the movement from self living to self giving and include opportunities for developing spiritual gifts and becoming equipped to do ministry. Members and partners of Trinity will be encouraged to engage in bible studies, prayer groups and classes as a basic expectation of belonging to Trinity.

Because we believe that persons grow as they serve, the staff of TUCC will be responsible for training leaders and seeing to the accomplishment of ministry rather than doing the ministry itself. The Staff is not called to do the Partners' ministry, but is called to equip the Partners to do ministry. They are to equip disciples, mentor and teach others.

Trinity will move from a congregation with small groups to a congregation of small groups. Our small groups will be lay lead and will perform these functions:

- Build accountability to the congregations' mission and vision.
- Spiritual nurture
- Build relationships
- Fulfill a ministry function; ushers to habitat workers.
- Develop new leaders
- Invite others to share the mission and vision

Anything that can be accomplished with a small group, will be.

Fellowship will be:

- An inclusive as the Kingdom of God, open to all to whom the Christ has invited into his family; TUCC welcomes all who welcome everyone, all who join in the "movement" (self living to self giving), and all who participate in the mission.
- Marked by extraordinary expressions of love, forgiveness and encouragement;
- Experienced in a variety of centers: worship, classes, small groups, mission events
- Based less on class and race, more on commonly held values (self giving) and reconciliation and unity in diversity.

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