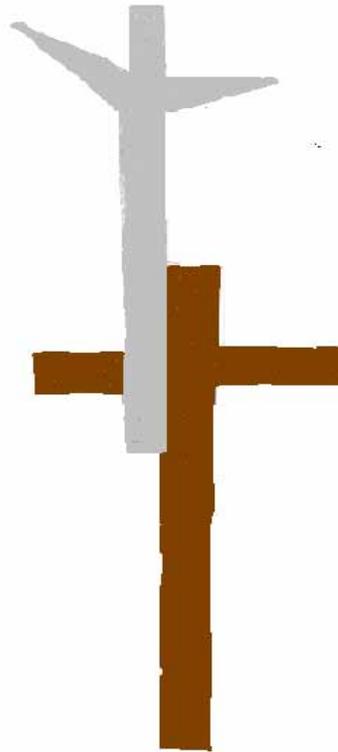


United in Faith

The Journey Continues: Years 6 - 10
2003 - 2008

A Living Hope!



United in Faith Lutheran Church

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THE VISION AND VALUES REVISITED

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
1 Peter 1: 3 - 9

The foundation of United in Faith Lutheran Church is our Lord Jesus Christ. How this church would live out its mission was forged during the consolidation process of 8 congregations and during its first five years. The vision and values adopted both guided and served to support the carrying out of ministries and the meeting of challenges in years 6 through 10. As a result the faith and the systems that hold the congregation together and allow it to adapt to changing conditions are stronger and more clarified. Glory be to you, O Lord!

Our Vision

United in Faith is a community of united disciples offering gifts to the world that can be found no place else.

Our Values

Weekly Worship
(Children and Youth *replaced*)
Every Person Who Walks through our Doors
The Gospel of Jesus
Prayer
Faith Development
(Caring for the Elderly *replaced*)
Feeding the Hungry
Working for Justice (*new*)
Engaging All People in the Life of the Church
(*new*)

In January 2006 a process was started to review and evaluate the vision and values for relevance at that time and for United in Faith's future. No changes to the vision were deemed necessary. Two changes were made to the values. Not being satisfied with only reacting to injustice, '**Working for Justice**' was added. 'Children and Youth' and 'Caring for the Elderly' were replaced by '**Engaging all people in the life of the church**' to emphasize the inclusiveness of all ages.

STAFFING THE VISION

Pastor Greg Moser, a chaplain in the Illinois Army National Guard, was called to active duty at Fort Polk, Louisiana in the fall of 2004. Pastor Dawn Mass Moser's job description was revised to cover the necessary duties previously performed by both Pastor Greg and herself. Some pastoral responsibilities were eliminated, and lay ministers took on larger responsibilities. Pastoral support was also provided by a senior seminarian from the Lutheran School of Theology. When Pastor Dawn took a leave of absence followed by reduced work hours, an interim pastor, Pastor David Dennison, was called until Pastor Greg returned in the fall of 2005. Upon Pastor Greg's return, Pastor Dawn resigned. Pastor Greg and the church council carefully reviewed and reflected on the congregational changes, pastoral needs and options, and recommended to enter the intern

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program. The first intern, Erin Clausen, served 2006 - 2007 followed by a second intern, Carrie Smith, in 2007 - 2008. Based on the successful terms of these high-caliber interns, the decision was made to continue in the intern program. The third intern, Julie Boleyn, will arrive in Fall 2008. United in Faith rejoices in providing a learning environment - both teaching and learning from the interns.

In April 2007 the Music Director resigned. Job descriptions were developed for an organist/choir director and a pianist/Praise Band director. These positions were filled in Fall 2007.

Pastor Greg was again called up for service in Italy for several months in early 2007 and has been called to a yearlong deployment in Afghanistan beginning in the fall of 2008. An interim pastor, Pastor Sue Schneider, was called for this most recent absence. United in Faith supported their Pastor in a time of war so that the Word could be proclaimed, the Sacraments administered and pastoral counseling provided to American soldiers. United in Faith also trusted its ability to continue its ministry during pastoral absences and maintained its sense of calling for ministry on the northwest side of Chicago.

STRUCTURING THE VISION

Governance and Committees

Church Council
Executive Committee

Audit Committee
Mutual Ministry Committee
Finance Committee
Property Management Committee
Nominating Committee
Call Committee
Education Endowment and Scholarship Committee

Mission Endowment Fund Committee
Intern Committee (*new*)

Future Building Use Committee (*new*)
Landscape Committee (*new*)
Thrivent Coordinators (*new*)
Web site Committee (*new*)
Communication Committee (*new*)

New committees were formed as needs arose. The **Intern Committee** serves as support for the intern, collectively offering the intern the opportunity to reflect on pastoral ministry in general as well as identify and encourage the intern's particular strengths and limitations in ministry. The **Future Building Use Committee** was formed to bring forth ideas and management for projects that will benefit United in Faith with improved and expanded facilities in the future. The **Landscape Committee** enhances the outside appearance of the buildings by planting and maintenance of flowers, shrubs and trees. **Thrivent Coordinators** help the congregation gain additional funding for projects supporting our vision and values from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. The **Web site Committee** keeps unitedinfaith.org welcoming, current, complete, and reflective of activities and information. The **Communication Committee** was formed in 2007 to enhance ministries through the ease, coordination and standardization of communication.

The Ministries of United in Faith

Children's
Confirmation (*new*)
Decorative Arts
Faith Development
Fellowship
Home Communion Visitation
Hospitality
Justice (*new*)
Men in Mission (*new*)
Outreach
Prayer
Service and Mission
Stewardship
Women's
Worship and Music
(Youth *replaced*)

Youth ministry became **Confirmation** and includes a Teen Group of post confirmation youth that participates in selected confirmation activities as well as their own separate activities.

Decorative Arts ministry was split off from Worship and Music and decorates the sanctuary seasonally.

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Outreach and Hospitality ministry was separated into two distinct ministries. **Outreach** focuses on our neighbors and bringing them to our doors. **Hospitality** focuses on Sunday morning greeters and follow-up calls to visitors.

Justice ministry focuses on the gospel of Jesus to do justice by working for the elimination of the root causes of injustice.

Men in Mission was formed in July 2007 to help the men of United in Faith get to know each other and move the church forward by helping men take a more proactive role in the church goals, youth, and other areas of concern.

Two groups that supported the ministries of United in Faith were dissolved in 2005: Arts and Crafts and Dorcas Circle.

Statement of Affirmation and Welcome

United In Faith, as a community of united disciples offering gifts to the world that can be found no place else:

- *affirms its intention to openly welcome and value every person who walks through our doors regardless of race, nationality and ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation and gender identities, marital status, social and economic situation, abilities, cultural realities and needs;

- *supports efforts to share with all, God's gifts of love, acceptance and grace;

- *invites all people, uniquely created by God, to experience the word of God, communion and the promise of the risen Christ;

- *and encourages all people to participate fully in the ministries of this congregation which are based on its core values.

After an educational series of speakers on gay, lesbian, and transgender issues, United in Faith

adopted in February 2004 this statement of affirmation and welcome as a public proclamation of its commitment to welcoming 'every person who walks through our doors'. United in Faith is designated a 'Reconciling in Christ' congregation.

Constitutional Changes

At the annual meeting in February 2008, two changes were approved. One allowed for the awarding of educational assistance to students in Christian (instead of only Lutheran) pre-schools through high schools to allow more choices for Christian education. The second change extended the period of time for placing 50% of undesignated monetary gifts in the congregation's reserve fund to provide adequate funding for the operations of the church. All remaining undesignated funds are placed in the Mission Endowment Fund.

Funding

In March 2003, the Family Crisis Fund was instituted due to the dramatic increase in the number of persons from the congregation in need of financial assistance due to loss of jobs, increased medical expenses, reduced work hours, etc. The Service and Mission committee administer the fund that receives donations from the congregation.

In July 2003, United in Faith was awarded a grant from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Fund for Mission Initiative to further outreach efforts including the third worship service that started in September of that year.

The Education Endowment and Scholarship Fund continued to provide annual scholarships and tuition to students. Almost \$15,000 was awarded in 2007.

A 3-year 'New Space for a Welcome Place' campaign to raise funds for the west building renovations began in Fall 2004.

A 'Raise the Roof' appeal in 2005 raised funds for repairs to the roof trusses in Fellowship Hall and the sanctuary.

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Operating expenses continued to exceed income over these 5 years while membership remained steady.

Communication

Pictorial directories were published in Fall 2003 and 2007.

In the summer of 2006, the Web site was overhauled to provide current and accurate information on all aspects of United in Faith. Most visitors meet United in Faith first at its Web site so the importance of this window was embraced. Newsletters and annual reports posted on the Web site enabled the printing and mailing of fewer documents.

Seasonal street pole banners outside our property were used to announce and call attention to our presence.

A new digital sign was installed outside the front door enabling scrolling messages and calling attention to the presence of a church in an untraditional building and setting.

Areas being addressed by the Communication committee include standard sign messages, a user-friendly Web site, reformatting newsletters and Sunday bulletins, a Welcome center and Welcome packet, consistent and pleasing display of information.

Property Improvements

The Cross of the Resurrection, outside and above the front door, was dedicated in October 2003. It is representative of the story of United in Faith's history, the history of God's forgiveness and hope for the world. The old wooden cross represents the death experience that the previous congregations walked through. The tall aluminum cross with arms and hands stretched up to God represents the new life that United in Faith celebrates today.

In Fall 2004, a roof support truss in the Fellowship Hall cracked, rendering Fellowship Hall and the sanctuary unusable until repairs were made and all the trusses were reinforced. Worship was first moved to the west building and then to the lounge. The Golden Diners program was suspended. In

April 2005 the worship space was rededicated after the completion of repairs and all activities in the affected spaces resumed.

Funding from the 'New Space for a Welcome Place' campaign allowed renovations to the west building: roof, eyebrows in front of both buildings, new windows, updated bathrooms, new back door, crash bars on doors, windows in school room doors. In 2008, the Eagle Scouts painted the interior of the building. Major projects remaining in the west building and awaiting funding include: a sprinkler system, a new electrical system, and an atrium connecting the east and west buildings.

Landscaping improvements to the front and back areas included trees, shrubs, and flowers. Boy Scouts assisted in weeding these areas.

The grand piano was refurbished in September 2007 with substantial funds raised by the congregation.

The bus that was gifted to United in Faith at its start for a senior program was put up for sale in 2008 since the vision for a senior program that offered transportation was not realized.

A stand of candles, a kneeler, and a cross were installed in the sanctuary as a special place to light a candle, kneel, and pray.

A cleaning service was hired in 2007 to replace the individuals hired to perform these tasks.

Worship

A third worship service was started in September 2003 to accommodate the growing attendance at the existing two services. This service was more contemplative and less structured, designed to appeal to the unchurched. The third service was eliminated in September 2007 due to low attendance and a desire to provide a full, standalone hour for education classes for both children and adults between services on Sunday mornings.

The music and liturgy continued to be highly regarded - varied, spirit filled, and celebratory. The Celebration Choir sings at the contemporary service. A children's choir, Schola United, has

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been started. Midnight Mass, the praise band, continues to lead music at the contemporary service.

The new Evangelical Lutheran Worship book replaced the Lutheran Book of Worship in February 2008.

Multi-week themed preaching series were used periodically to explore topics in depth. Themes have included: King David, Summer Road Trip: Family Vacation with Abraham and Sarah, and Justice. Lenten and Advent services were also themed. 'Blue Christmas' services were held for those suffering from grief or loss in their life.

Worship attendance dipped slightly in the last 2 years mostly attributed to the deaths of elderly members who were a vital part in the consolidation of the 8 congregations and regular worshippers.

LIVING THE VISION

Creating Traditions

As a young congregation, new traditions were created over the first 10 years.

- * Seasonal and holiday Fellowship and Outreach dinners
- * Special food pantry collections for Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas
- * Spring Cleaning
- * Annual Women's Spring Brunch (served by the men of United in Faith)
- * Attending Lutheran Day in Springfield to discuss issues with representatives and meet other Lutheran advocates
- * Wrapping cookies/packing health kits/serving dinner for The Night Ministry organization
- * Youth summer mission/gathering trips (2003 Atlanta National Youth Gathering, 2004 Fort Apache, Arizona mission trip, 2005 Juarez, Mexico mission trip, 2007 Black Hills camping trip, 2008 Global Mission Event in LaCrosse, WI)
- * Vacation Bible School
- * Youth Summer camp at the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Camp (partial camperships given to all participating youth)
- * Collection of Back to School Supplies for Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

- * Fall Rally Day/Block Party for the congregation, neighbors, and friends with food, music, entertainment, registration, and information on the ministries of United in Faith (not held in 2008)
- * Sunday Church School
- * Weekly Bible/book studies
- * Explore Belonging classes for people interested in learning more about United in Faith
- * LifeKeys program for discovering spiritual gifts
- * Christmas Bazaar in October
- * Cookie Walk in December (Women of the ELCA)
- * Wrapping gifts at Borders to benefit St. Cyprian's Food Pantry
- * Donation of Christmas Gifts to the children of St. Cyprian's Food Pantry (over 150 gifts were given in 2007)

Serving

Justice ministry highlighted issues of hunger, voters registration, refugees and displaced persons, the differently abled, women, racism, and economics through speaker series, monthly letter writing opportunities to legislators, workshops, events, and seminars, and a Christmas catalog of places to shop where proceeds from sales helped to employ the poor, feed the hungry, house the homeless, and more.

Faith Development held a series of events to highlight the Holy Land in Conflict including a Lenten speaker series, a presentation (cosponsored by WELCA) by a retired LSTC professor who served as a volunteer with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program, book club selections on Islam and from the Bishop of Jerusalem of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and Jerusalem, and a series of videos from Peace Not Walls. The Altar Guild acquired Communion ware crafted in the Holy Land.

Youth ministry raised funds for trips and activities through Sunday breakfasts, the Jesus Java Café, and chore auctions, and participated in community youth events and ministry projects (Crop Walk, St. Cyprian Food Pantry Christmas gifts and food collections, Christmas caroling to the shut-ins).

As part of the intern's project focused on the ELCA's Book of Faith Initiative, over 80 Bibles were given away in the fall of 2007.

Other ministries continued their dedicated work:

- * Communion visitation to those unable to attend church (over 100 visits made each year)
- * Intercessory prayers as requested and maintenance of a prayer list for distribution
- * Building and landscape maintenance and upkeep
- * *The Lutheran* magazine subscriptions to all families
- * Preparation of the altar for each service and maintenance of the paraments, vestments, and linens
- * Preparation of youth for confirmation
- * Raising up stewardship topics
- * Monthly opportunities to grow in faith by the Women of the ELCA

United in Faith continued to host these organizations:

Boy Scouts
Girl Scouts
Golden Diners
St. Cyprian's Food Pantry
Senior Club
Unfinished Objects (crafts/hobbies group)
Alcoholics Anonymous
Al Anon
Survivors of Incest Anonymous

Life at and around United in Faith is busy as we strive 'to be a community of united disciples offering gifts to the world that can be found no place else'. United in Faith has become stronger and bolder during its 10 years through a new birth into a living hope.

Thanks be to God!