

# The Strategic Plan 2014 - 2018 Trinity Reformed Church

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for ministry is centered upon God's reconciling love found in Jesus Christ. God gathers, forgives, transforms and sends us to bring Christ's reconciling love to our neighbors and the world.

Our mission is to respond to God's sending. In the year 2018, Trinity Reformed Church as members and a membership will be practicing discipleship inwardly and outwardly resulting in sustainable growth in membership, diversity and neighborhood development.

## DISCIPLESHIP GOAL

The following approach to discipleship may be the most comprehensive strategy Trinity has had in decades. It is a struggle to discern how people are equipped for ministry and grow in relationship with each other and with Christ. The approach below is characterized by clarity about how that might happen and courage to give it a try.

### Definition/Purpose

A working definition of discipleship has been developed (see below) understanding that clarity around definition, leads to clarity of purpose, leads to courage in implementing and sustaining discipleship opportunities.

Discipleship is growing together by imitating Christ:

- It is initiated by the Holy Spirit.
- It is an ongoing process.
- It involves our whole being.
- Its purpose is a life of joyful abundance

Trinity will observe a "Commitment Sunday" in early September during which members will be invited to make an annual commitment to certain discipleship experiences. A format will be developed for monitoring discipleship experiences by gathering statistics (about number and frequency of participation) and stories to be shared with the congregation about transformation in peoples' lives as they increasingly become imitators of Christ.

### Discipleship Opportunities

People connect with each other and with God in a variety of ways. Discipleship opportunities will focus on nine "spiritual pathways":

- Prayer and meditation
- Study
- Service

- Justice and equity
- Action/Reflection
- Relationships and Connecting
- Worship
- Creativity and Beauty
- Creation
- Wellness

At least one discipleship experience in each of these pathways for youth-adults will be offered each year. Opportunities for growth will also be offered that involve different types of participation/interactions with others: one-on-one (mentoring/coaching relationships), pairs/triads, small group and large group experiences. These opportunities have a variety of time commitments. A Discipleship Opportunities Grid will enable the Discipleship Team to see what opportunities are currently offered and to plan for additional discipleship opportunities. When introduced to the congregation each discipleship opportunity will have a brief description, a contact person, and the time and place for meeting, so that accessibility is as easy as possible.

### Communication of Discipleship Opportunities

Regular and varied communication approaches regarding discipleship opportunities will be utilized including the following:

- **technology** such as the Trinity web site,
- **e-vites** to classes, Trinity Times, etc.;
- **events** such as the Trinity Ministry Fair, inviting people to “try a ministry” such as Community Kitchen, Schools of Hope, etc.;
- **communication at church** such as pamphlets, an information booth on Sunday morning, bulletin boards, etc.;
- **invitation** such as “a minute for discipleship” during worship, announcements, encouragement to invite friends to particular events, worship emphasis on discipleship in the fall.

Every communication will include a description of the opportunity, the name of the contact person, where and when the group meets.

## MEMBERSHIP/BELONGING GOAL

- To bolster worship attendance to be able to participate with a more full community of the people of God on Sundays.
- To proclaim the presence and identity of Trinity through virtual and physical engagement with our city, letting people know we are a place to which they could belong.
- To be present in the things going on in our city, outside our own neighborhood, that match Trinity’s heart, vision and values.

## Communication

Communication is vital to all aspects of the strategic plan. Communication is the central role regarding the Membership/Belonging Goal: within the congregation; outside the congregation; and, integrating Trinity with people who need a home and “people of peace.”

What needs to be communicated by the staff and membership is Trinity’s unique identity which has been formed by our theological convictions, worship personality, goals for work in the world, and the nature of our people.

### Communication within the congregation.

- **Listening to the congregation** about who we are (missionally, ecclesiologically, theologically, etc.) and in turn keeping us accountable to that identity
- **Collaborating with worship planning** to make our identity part of liturgy and teaching

### Communication outside the congregation.

- **Building and up keeping a social media presence** that clearly lets the world know who we are through posted content, images, and internet dialogue, utilizing, the website, Twitter accounts & conversations. Facebook accounts & activity, blogging, online discussion forums and Podcasts.
- **Showing up to represent Trinity** in our neighborhood, but more importantly throughout Grand Rapids and throughout West Michigan, communicating that Trinity is a place of peace where hurting/searching ones can belong.
- **Collaborating with other church bodies**, of various denominations, who are of like identity.

### Integrating our congregation with people searching for a home and “people of peace”.

- **Identifying and leading a hospitality team** that disciples new members and connects with new attendees.
- **Identifying “people of peace”** in all these outside place, those whom Trinity may “need” to join into our work and community.
- **Hosting and/or organizing/co-organizing wider community events** that communicate our identity and further our work in the world, region, city and neighborhood.
- **Carefully creating and presenting print and physical invitation** to those who may show up.

## Patterns of Belonging

The committee proposes the following items in order to transform the concept of membership at Trinity:

- **Intentional, accountable hospitality** to brand-new and newly engaging individuals and families, through the creation of a permanent hospitality team to oversee and engage this.
- **Public celebration and meaningful relational structures** for new members and prospective members.
- **Reform our membership process** to be more relational and dynamic, including regular gatherings and renewal opportunities for *current* members.

## DIVERSITY GOAL

In its leadership, membership and ministries, Trinity will reflect the diversities of its neighborhood and the changing culture of Great Grand Rapids.

Believing strongly that unity is inherent in the goal to become a more diverse body of Christ, the people of Trinity will discern a diverse future utilizing two phases of a journey together consisting of:

- **Creative congregational engagement over the next two years** seeking to deepen our congregational intention to welcome and embrace diversity and discern which diverse individuals and groups of people we are being called to include and incorporate. The engagement will initially begin with diversities currently experienced by Trinity's members. In some cases, actions steps related to the diversity goal will be recommended in the initial two year phases. We suggest that the Consistory form and empower an ongoing Diversity Team to initiate and coordinate this engagement, recommend steps for immediate implementation that seem consensual, and bring additional specific recommendations with action steps to the consistory as the process progresses.
- **The implementation and evaluation of recommended action steps** regarding diversity over the following two years.

## SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Because we believe that God is already working to enable justice and compassion to flourish on the northwest side of Grand Rapids and to further our vision that all life will experience God's shalom and reconciling love, the body of Christ called Trinity Reformed Church commits to the following strategy for sustainable and mutual engagement with the neighborhood in which we are planted.

**We will move toward fully embracing and utilizing the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).** This means that we will strive to bring together the gifts and strengths of the people at Trinity with the gifts and strengths of our neighbors (residents, businesses, organizations). In short, we will change the way we currently engage with neighborhood residents and stakeholders so that it will be characterized more by "working with" residents (and identifying and using our mutual assets/strengths/gifts) than by "doing for" them. To reach this goal the following will be accomplished over the next 3-5 years:

- **Contracting with Wayne Squires**, a community development trainer and coach with Partners in Neighborhood Transformation who last spring engaged the congregation in three highly attended Adult Sunday School classes. Squires will provide practical and strategic support for our neighborhood initiatives and to help keep us accountable for moving toward our goal. We anticipate a 12 month contract with Wayne.
- **Organizing and implementing continuing educational and practical experiences** in respectful listening and "good neighboring".
- **Experimenting with ABCD principles** in our current neighborhood ministries: Community Kitchen, Schools of Hope, and Front Porch.
- **Developing strong partnerships** (using ABCD principles) with other churches, ministries, and organizations that share a commitment to working for the common good and flourishing of the neighborhood and city. Possibilities include Harrison Park School, West Grand Neighborhood Association, West Leonard Business Association, and developing an intentional network of churches.