

Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church
Three Year Strategic Plan
January 2023 – December 2025

Compiled by the Strategic Planning Team
Adopted by the Congregation Council, May 31, 2022
Accepted by the Congregation, June 26, 2022

Introduction

We are in the midst of an exciting time in the life of Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church. Our congregation is changing. We are discerning God's call to shape our future. What is God calling our congregation to be now? How do we focus our resources for a faithful future? How do we honor the legacy of our congregation and birth the next iteration of Christian community? How do we innovate or reinvent while still being rooted in our traditions? We responded with intention: by setting aside time to listen and discern a future, together. The goal? A strategic plan to guide what we are being "sent" to do, our mission over the course of the next three years, 2023 through 2025.

By May 2021, Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church had returned to in-person liturgies while maintaining an online presence in the post-pandemic world, and yet, we found many of our time-honored traditions to be in limbo for various reasons. The congregation was facing transition of its pastoral leadership which necessitated an Interim Pastor, and a search and call process for a new Senior Pastor. In September 2021, Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church accepted a request from Memorial Drive Lutheran Church (Houston) to merge. The Congregation suddenly found itself in three communities – Rice Village, Memorial Villages ("West Campus") and Digital.

The planning process began in the last months of 2021. The Congregation Council appointed a Strategic Planning Team. By the end of February 2022, a congregation-wide online survey was undertaken to ensure that parishioners could share their thoughts. An in-person gathering served as a Congregation Summit to commence the planning effort which would involve subsequent surveys, conversations, and listening sessions. The Congregation Council adopted the plan on May 31, 2022, to be sent onto the congregation for response and feedback.

Devoted and skilled staff members continue to provide daily support to the mission and ministry of Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church. The staff partners, with congregation leaders, the community, and others support the rich treasury of liturgical and musical gifts, vibrant programs, and expressions of pastoral care enriching greater Houston.

Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church seeks to act together, called to greater challenges and opportunities, to share God's mission of love and service. We welcome you to join on this journey.

Congregation Mission and Vision Statements

Mission Statement

Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church is a welcoming and inclusive community nourished by Christ in vibrant worship and committed to God's mission of love and service especially to the oppressed and to the poor.

Vision Statement

Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church will be a recognized leader partnering with others to transform lives.

Our Values and Beliefs

Called by the Spirit, we honor Christ and God's people with integrity.

We are Christ's Church, which exists not for itself, but for the world.

We desire to worship regularly together so that God's people can be nourished by Christ, develop an emerging individual and collective spiritual identity, and demonstrate the reality of God's presence in our daily lives.

We are centered, challenged, and motivated by Christian teachings and practices as viewed through a Lutheran perspective.

We are Spirit-led, critical thinkers engaged in a learning journey with others.

We honor and utilize the rich heritage of sacred music and especially an emphasis on the Lutheran music traditions.

We believe it is more blessed to give than to receive.

We welcome opportunities to serve God as a community and as individuals.

We endeavor to know people, affirm their God-given dignity, and introduce them to Jesus Christ through acts of service so that all may grow in spiritual maturity.

We believe we are one with all of God's children and creation. We will collaborate with individuals, faith communities, and other organizations with shared values.

As partners, we will engage in just relationships with others characterized by healthy boundaries, fiscal accountability, shared vision, and clear communications.

The Strategic Plan

From all comments and ideas put forward by individual parishioners, the Strategic Planning Team synthesized three strategic themes that will guide our programming, investment of resources, and development for the next three years. Each of these themes is generative of the next, in a way that suggests a continuous circle. These themes *and* our aligning values provide both a **rudder** (what are the things we should do?) and a **filter** (what are things we cannot do?) for our planning of ministries and programs.

Becoming a spiritual home

“This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road.”
Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will

This theme is not to insinuate that Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church is not a spiritual home. Rather, we are an ever-changing, morphing congregation, growing in spiritual maturity. We strive to keep ourselves relevant in the landscape of God’s mission. An individual’s connection to a spiritual home is affected by milestones in one’s life, such as, but not limited to: confirmation, living on one’s own, marriage, starting a family, starting a new job, losing a job, grief, effervescent joy, divorce, death of a loved one. These mile markers – be it age or life’s events – provide opportunities for parishioners and others to grow in relationship with one another and Christ, by Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church becoming a spiritual home.

- We will prioritize development of personal connections among members so that trusting relationships grow among us through various congregational social gatherings and informal opportunities.
- We will continue to explore and determine the best missional use of our physical facilities.
- We will maintain our facilities and property and act expeditiously to repair or replace any element that might pose a danger to persons using our facilities.
- We will continue to seek and apply best practices to ensure the safety and security of all who are served by our staff and volunteers. This includes but is not limited to background checks and sensitivity training.
- We will provide resources and training in learning to navigate life’s transitions, drawing on Lutheran theology.
- We will explore opportunities to elevate Lutheran music traditions within the context of and appreciation for various forms of sacred music.
- We will develop a path toward offering membership to those whose participation is limited to online worship.
- We will build a sustainable campus ministry at Rice University.
- We will build a sustainable Latine ministry.
- We will utilize the work of the current Merger and Integration Steering Team to provide intentional processes to unite members from our Rice Village and west campuses and our digital community.

Implementing technological innovations to expand our reach

The internet, cell phones, and more broadly speaking, social media, have changed the world over the past thirty years, resulting in what is called "the network society". For Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church to function within a fluid network society it should devise a proper and effective digital and electronic communication strategy for the congregation's ministry. In order to remain relevant within the digital age, Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church must undergo a shift from being mere providers of information, to becoming mentors, co-travelers and wise guides who assist one another by developing content and attempting to carve out space on platforms dominated by secular voices, to the glory of God and for the benefit of others.

- We will establish a standing committee to assess existing and available technologies.
- We will implement virtual platforms as a means to develop community.

Acting justly in support of others and ourselves

The book of James reminds us, *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead."* (James 2:26) James affirms that deeds (or actions) are the byproduct of a living faith. Works do not justify us or make us righteous before God, nor are they the means to salvation. Rather, our deeds are the fruit that grows from one who is obedient to God's commands and transformed by God's grace.

Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church believes a natural outcome of our faithful joy is not only sharing our stories and experiences of the transforming influence of God in our lives with others, but also sharing our resources – our time, energy, and money. Just as a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward grace, generosity is an outward and visible sign of our deepening faith. Recognizing Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church's mission requires substantial human and financial resources. We will encourage generosity in our congregation.

Through innovative leadership and a faithful commitment to incarnational ministry, Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church can cultivate community renewal through compassionate acts of love and grace.

- We will affirm our current partnerships and ministries of advocacy and service.
- We will identify unique opportunities for Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church to address social needs in Houston and develop a plan of action.
- We will enter an active partnership with St. James Family Life Center.

Conclusion

The planning process revealed a desire to focus both inside and outside of the congregation.

In Mark's gospel we are exhorted to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15) Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church is an open and loving parish that embraces all who wish to know God in this place. We are a faith community, drawing parishioners from many geographic areas, demographics, affinities, and mile markers on the faith journey. Intentional group gatherings will provide opportunities for parishioners to gather to grow in relationship with one another and Christ, toward the goal of every parishioner becoming involved in community at Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Vibrant education programs will continue to engage our intellect, as well as include spiritual practices and formation for the whole person. St. Paul says in Romans, "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God." (Romans 12:2) The prophet Ezekiel promises, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." (Ezekiel 36:26).

Our own joyful response to the transforming influence of God in our lives is to share joy with others. We call this *Evangelism*, and it is a direct outgrowth of community, spiritual discipline, and formation. We will find technologies and platforms to share stories, share joy, and share the story of God's love.

Finally, for many years, Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church has been a faithful partner in many advocacy and service ministries. In addition to that good work, we will focus to partner with individuals, faith communities, and other organizations, with shared values, to amplify and enhance our service to Houston's communities in need.

Afterword

The Congregation Council on May 31, 2022, accepted the following recommendations from the Strategic Planning Team to:

- Re-establish standing working congregation-committees.
- Establish a standing communications committee to examine and improve internal communications within the congregation.
- Establish a standing marketing committee to raise Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church's visibility in greater Houston.
- Engage and continue to support a parish nurse.
- To make every effort necessary by December 31, 2022, to become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation.
- To develop by December 31, 2022, criteria to engage each other on matters in which we do not immediately agree.
- To appoint a Strategic Plan Oversight Commission, reporting to Council.

The Strategic Planning Team listened to the congregation's impassioned calls to have these actions set forth. The Strategic Planning Team and the Congregation Council believed such items were issues aside from a strategic planning document and should be adopted separate and apart into ongoing congregation operations. The Congregation Council has begun steps to implement these recommendations.

With Gratitude

The Congregation Council wishes to express its gratitude to the Strategic Planning Team for its work, creating opportunities to listen to the congregation and to read ideas and receive feedback from the congregation, as an integral part of its prayerful deliberation to reflect on God's future plan for Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church.

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