

## Mission Statement: Part 1

Why do we exist as a church? I wonder if you've ever asked yourself that question. Very often an organization will spell out its key purpose, the reason it exists, by crafting a mission statement. For example, "The mission of The Walt Disney Company is to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information.... [W]e seek to develop the most creative, innovative, and profitable entertainment experiences and related products in the world." You can hear what's important to Disney as a business, can't you? Creativity, innovation, and of course the profit motive - important for any business. Or look at the mission statement of a charity. "The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization... will provide relief to victims of disaster and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies."

A mission statement explains why an organization exists. It communicates *what* they do, *how* and *why* they do it, and even *where* they do it. A clear statement will also preclude certain things - things which might be nice to do, but which they have decided are not their top priorities. So for example, folks at the Red Cross might really like ice cream. But since making and selling ice cream would detract from their more important, stated priorities, it's unlikely that you'll ever see a "Red Cross Ice Cream Shop" anytime soon.

So what about a church? Of course a church is not a business. Nor is it simply a non-profit charity. The universal Church is unique, commissioned by Jesus himself and sent out into the world on his mission. The Apostle Matthew ends his Gospel account with this: *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:18-20, see also Acts 1:8).

That mission, commonly called The Great Commission, is to guide each and every Christian congregation throughout time and space. And yet each local church will express that universal mission in some unique ways, according to its own gifts and context. So why does Eau Claire Presbyterian Church exist? Your Fanning the Flame Team has been working hard on that question (along with a lot of other important projects). We have prayerfully developed the following mission statement for our church, and we are eager to share it with you all.

*For God's glory and by His grace,  
we exist to make, mature, and mobilize disciples  
who worship God, proclaim the gospel, and serve  
the Eau Claire community, the Columbia area, and the world.*

There is a lot packed into that statement. And in our next Tower Notes I want to delve deeper, taking us through it line by line. But for now, keep an eye out for this new mission statement as it begins to appear in our bulletins and newsletters. As we seek to follow our Lord into the future, it will be important for each of us to understand why we do (and don't) exist as a church. There is great value in crafting and owning a short statement like this. It will help us to stay focussed, on mission with our Lord as he leads us forward, all for the purpose of his glory and empowered by his amazing grace.

Yours on mission together,

Tim

October 2011

## **Mission Statement: Part 2**

*For God's glory and by His grace,  
we exist to make, mature, and mobilize disciples  
who worship God, proclaim the gospel, and serve  
the Eau Claire community, the Columbia area, and the world.*

In last month's Tower Notes we introduced ECPC's new mission statement. Your Fanning the Flame Team developed this statement with much prayer and thought. And while I'm sure it isn't perfect (nothing is besides God himself), we believe that it accurately captures why we exist as a particular church, what our Lord is calling us primarily to do, how and why we do it, and even where we do it. The value of such a statement is to help unite and focus our ministry efforts, setting some priorities and boundaries on the kinds of ministry we believe God may, and may not, be calling us to.

This month I'd like to look at the mission statement more closely. These comments don't exhaust the meaning of any phrase, but I hope they'll be helpful starting points for your own thoughts and prayers about our church.

- *For God's glory*: If we wanted to boil everything else down to one phrase, this would be it. Why do we exist? Why does anyone exist on this earth? Scripture tells us that we are made to glorify God, to magnify him in the same way a telescope trained on a distant galaxy is made to magnify and make visible something majestic. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). We exist for God's praise in everything we do - not just in our supposedly spiritual activities, but in literally every action, word, thought, and feeling. We seek, by his grace, to glorify him. And we take great delight in fulfilling that purpose as his redeemed people.

- *By His grace:* The Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Pet. 2:10, “Once you [*plural*] were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” It is only by God’s unmerited grace that we exist, that we have been called into his world-wide family, the Church Universal, and that we have been knit together in love (Col. 2:2) in this local congregation. It’s all about grace, which is to say, it’s all about Christ and what he has done for his sinful covenant people. This is our chief motivation, our message, our hope, our joy.

- *We exist to make, mature, and mobilize disciples:* Discipleship is probably the best catch-all term for the Christian life. Jesus did not commission us to “go and make converts,” but to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). Being a Christian is not about relying on a one-time decision made in the past. It is a daily walk, an ongoing process of gradual maturity (Col. 1:28) as we follow hard after Jesus. Once God has converted us, setting us on his path of discipleship, he also mobilizes us into action. He invites and empowers us to join him in his world-wide mission of seeking and saving others who are lost, and to disciple them toward maturity and mission. So we must never become an ingrown church, preoccupied solely with our own activities and preferences. God calls every church to be an outward-facing church – simultaneously making and incorporating new disciples, fighting for our growth together in Christ, and moving out with gospel love into a dying world.

- *Worship God:* Along with hundreds of other passages, Psalm 95:6 calls us to worship God. “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!” We’ve already seen that we were created to glorify God in every aspect of our lives. Here we remember that one of the main purposes of any church is to gather together specifically for public worship. Our Lord’s Day corporate worship should be the highlight of the day, even of the week. With King David we say, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” (Ps. 122:1). We don’t treat it casually, or neglect it if we can help it (Heb. 10:25). Instead we prepare for it, we look forward to it, we savor it. Together we worship with prayers and confession, creeds and sacraments, silence and singing, Scripture reading and preaching. We are the gathered people of God, called before his throne, in dialogue with him and with each other. This is our weekly foretaste of the never-ceasing heavenly reality we will someday experience.

- *Proclaim the gospel:* Jesus sends us out to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you... (Matt. 28:19-20).” We proclaim the gospel, literally the “good news,” that Jesus Christ died to save sinners. This is how we make new disciples. But proclaiming and applying the gospel is also how we mature in our discipleship. We preach the gospel to ourselves and to one another on a regular basis. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another

in all wisdom...” (Col. 3:16). The gospel is not just how we first got saved. It’s also how we daily live the life of a disciple. As pastor Tim Keller puts it, “The gospel is not just the ABCs but the A-to-Z of the Christian life.” We never move beyond this message; we only grow deeper into it.

- *Serve*: We must be careful to share Christ’s love not with words only, but with our deeds as well (see James 2:15-17). When God sent his people into pagan Babylon, he commanded them to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare”(Jer. 29:7). On this corner where God has planted us, we want to be the best possible neighbor to our community, such that even our unbelieving neighbors would miss us if we were no longer here. We honor Christ by serving a needy community in his name.

- *The Eau Claire community, the Columbia area, and the world*: Finally, where do we do all this witnessing and serving? We take the expanding concentric circles of Acts 1:8 as our paradigm: “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” We prioritize ministry to our near neighbors, with an eye toward the renewal of our whole city, and always supporting the spread of the gospel across the entire globe until Christ returns.

We pray that this mission statement will be a rallying point for all of us here at ECPC. Let it shape your own prayers as we seek to follow our Savior together.

Yours on mission together,  
Tim  
November 2011