



God's Vision for Prince of Peace

July 2014

CORE VALUES

FAITH:

We value growing in our relationship with God.

CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY:

We value relationships in which we grow together to celebrate one another's joys and bear one another's burdens.

SERVICE:

We value providing for the needs of others in Jesus' name.

PURPOSE

LOVE GOD AND ALL PEOPLE by being the heart, hands and feet of Jesus in the world so that all might know that they are loved.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal):

Be known as the CONNECTING CHURCH ...

... WORKING COLLABORATIVELY with schools, churches, local government, campus partners, other organizations and the business community, and

... PROVIDING HOPE AND WHOLENESS to all people, with specific focus on children, seniors and people in poverty in the south metro area.

VISION: DESCRIPTION

Twenty years from now Prince of Peace will be known as “the connecting church.” We'll be a critical partner with other organizations, spreading God's love throughout the south metro area and beyond, with specific focus on children, seniors and people in poverty.

Prince of Peace is uniquely positioned for this calling. By God's grace we have earned respect, developed strategic partnerships and have ministry strength and passion in each of these areas. If you connect the dots of our past, they form the line of this vision's trajectory.

Our missional life together will look like this:

- We offer support services to help people become whole, healthy and self-sufficient.
- The community joins us for collaborative opportunities, meeting others with similar interests while doing community work that takes a team: justice issues, mentoring, tutoring, etc.
- We are equipped to see ourselves as missionaries in daily life, recognizing our work and daily activities as our calling.
- Those who are served by Prince of Peace are empowered to serve others.
- We serve as a clearinghouse for educational opportunities and resources supporting missional communities, small groups, affinity groups and individuals in the local community and beyond, helping them grow in their faith and equipping them to live their faith in daily life.
- We offer a centralized location for the community to come together and celebrate what God is doing in peoples' lives, to meet and support one another, in our joys and in our grief.
- Our size is leveraged to make an impact across the globe, as we send people and resources out to join in God's movement, in partnership with others.
- We offer a place where those who don't want to be a part of an institution can instead be a part of God's movement. Many of our new volunteers are not already affiliated with a church. They'll have the opportunity to express their own spirituality and explore deepening faith their way by becoming the heart, hands and feet of Christ in the world.
- We are true partners with others in our community who are also doing God's work.
- All of this results in exponential growth of people living God's mission in the world.

VISION: NARRATIVE

If you stop someone on the street in 2029 and ask them about Prince of Peace, you'll probably hear something like this: "They're that faith community that's always out in the south metro area, caring for people. They welcome everyone. I don't go to church, but a neighbor invited me to be a part of her small group, and I'm thinking about it."

And if you ask Prince of Peace disciples in 2029 about their faith, they'll tell you about how being a part of the faith community has enriched their lives. They feel deeply connected UP to God in a way that centers their lives in love and grace. They feel deeply connected IN to a caring community where they can freely share the joys and challenges of daily life. And they feel equipped and motivated to invest themselves in God's work OUT in the world. This has brought them a deeper sense of joy and purpose than ever before. Imagine this:

It's around 4:15 on a Monday afternoon in 2029. The multi-purpose facility bearing the name "Prince of Peace Lutheran Church" is buzzing with activity. This dynamic, flexible, efficient space houses Prince of Peace and several partners who share a vision of collaboration, providing hope and wholeness to all people, with specific focus on children, seniors and those in poverty throughout the south metro area. This facility, and the collaboration inside, changes the way people engage in church.

If you listen carefully, you can hear the echoes of worship from the day before. Less than 24 hours ago, hundreds of worshipers of all ages and backgrounds gathered in praise, a vibrant response to what God has been doing in their lives all week long. After worship, people lingered to build community, sharing the joys and challenges of life, praying with and for one another. **This is how the community grows UP with God.**

But now, on Monday afternoon, the space has been reconfigured. Now it's inhabited by the hundreds of volunteers who collaborate with more than a dozen local agencies, all focused on helping people become whole, hopeful and self-sufficient. Physician's assistants from local clinics meet in a brightly-colored room with expectant mothers to provide pre-natal care and instruction. Down the hall, a few community residents wait to be called for their screening at the dental clinic.

Energized volunteers from all over the community are tutoring dozens of children from neighborhood schools. Education majors from local universities hone their skills as they invest both love and wisdom into these future citizens and leaders. Diverse groups of people are in mentoring huddles, a collaborative effort between social service agencies and volunteers, helping people become financially independent. The air is filled with hope and the smell of coffee.

Outside, volunteers work in the community garden, providing fresh produce for the food shelf that's run by Prince of Peace, The Salvation Army, 360 Communities, and other partners. Hundreds of people come for food, clothing, prayer and support. They're greeted and served by Prince of Peace disciples working alongside volunteers from the community who call themselves "spiritual but not religious." Together they discover that faith isn't about rules, but about loving, supportive relationships.

While the campus is alive with activity, Prince of Peace disciples are out in the world serving as the heart, hands and feet of Jesus. A group of seniors provides after-school care at an elementary school, spending time with kids who are hungry for attention. Another group of seniors with mobility challenges gathers in their residence hall to pray for struggling students by name. Later that evening, many families will pay a visit to their adopted grandparent, a local senior whose isolation has now been replaced by a sense of love and belonging.

Prince of Peace connects with partners all over the south metro area, working collaboratively to provide hope and wholeness wherever they're needed. And while this collaboration offers organized opportunities to volunteer, the most powerful engine of mission and ministry is the everyday life of disciples who are equipped to see their own lives as a mission trip. They know that they're already part of what God is up to in the world without adding to their already-busy schedules. Wherever Prince of Peace disciples live, work and play ... that's where Prince of Peace is, and that's where ministry in Jesus' name happens.

Students share Jesus' love with their classmates. Stay-at-home parents realize that their neighborhoods and parks are centers for personal ministry. Those with jobs become the heart, hands and feet of Jesus for their co-workers and customers. Seniors see their communities as fertile fields for planting the seeds of Jesus' love. Parents and grandparents see the baseball diamond, football field, soccer field, ice arena, dance studio and gym as the very places they've been called to build bridges of relationship in Jesus' name. **This is how God's Kingdom grows OUT for the World.**

All this passion to serve comes from lives that are growing in grace and faith, and hearts that are being transformed. A family gathers around the dinner table and talks about life and faith using simple resources provided by Prince of Peace. The parents love growing right along with their children, and they feel equipped by these simple tools to build a solid faith foundation for their family.

Small groups of people, some long-time Christ-followers and others simply curious, meet in coffee shops, restaurants and homes throughout the south metro area, supporting one another and wrestling with the intersection of life and faith. A saleswoman doing business overseas is connected to her small group through technology, allowing her to grow in faith and stay connected to community despite her busy travel schedule.

Most disciples at Prince of Peace belong to a group like this, where they can grow in faith and community. In these groups, vulnerable conversation about the joys and challenges of life are common. Disciples pray for one another. They support and challenge one another. They frequently serve together, inviting neighbors and co-workers to join them.

In one coffee shop, an onlooker can't help but eavesdrop on a small group's conversation, wishing that she had that kind of life-giving connection in her own life. Little does she know that, in just a few moments, someone in that group will notice her looking on and invite her into the circle of friendship. **This is how God's Kingdom grows IN through Community.**

Across the metro area, larger gatherings called missional communities are meeting. Made up of Christ-followers and the spiritually curious, these groups gather to share a meal, talk honestly about life and faith, and bring restoration to some part of their community. Some groups regularly fill backpacks with healthy snacks for students in financial need. Some serve and pray for a local apartment complex, mentoring parents and students alike.

Other missional communities adopt a senior center, providing companionship to lonely residents. Still others come together to serve at Prince of Peace's collaborative food shelf. Together these groups are learning how to live the way of Jesus by tending to the UP, IN and OUT dimensions of life and ministry.

Prince of Peace has embraced the challenge to follow God's missional call in an ever-changing world. The risks that Prince of Peace disciples have taken are producing remarkable blessings in their own lives and in the community ... just like their initial innovation seven decades earlier. Prince of Peace is a model for a new way to do church, and people are taking notice. Stories about this innovation impact communities far away.

There is joy in God's heart, because "your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is more than just words. It's a growing reality. Disciples at Prince of Peace know that they've been blessed to be a blessing. And because of the ministry of God's people, these are just a few of the prayers that God hears:

- ... Thank you, God. We have food to eat tonight.
- ... Thank you, God. I don't feel afraid and alone anymore.
- ... Thank you, God. I know you and trust you so much more.
- ... Thank you, God. My teeth don't hurt anymore.
- ... Thank you, God, for the opportunity to make a real difference in someone else's life.
- ... Thank you, God. We're so much closer as a family.
- ... Thank you, God, for the blessing of real friends who love and support me.
- ... Thank you, God. I can read!
- ... Thank you, God. I can finally provide for my family.
- ... Thank you, God. We can send our daughter off to college tomorrow, confident that she has a foundation of faith.
- ... Thank you, God. My life is filled with so much purpose and meaning.
- ... Thank you, God, for my new grandma.
- ... **Thank you, God, for a place where I feel like I belong.**