

DRAFT OF A MISSION STATEMENT FOR SAINT LUKE PARISH, WESTPORT CT

Some Background

Unlike the other three evangelists, Jews who were writing largely for a Jewish audience, Luke writes for a people who would not have the grounding of Jewish scripture and law and custom. In essence he, more than Matthew, Mark or John, writes for people like you and me.

The stained glass window in our choir loft contains the words “**Dear Lover of God,**” taken from the first four verses of his Gospel, and referring to someone named “Theophilus,” Greek for “Lover of God”:

1. Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us,
2. just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us,
3. I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus,
4. so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

Luke writes to us for that reason – because we are beloved of God and he wants us to know it – **to have rock-solid certainty in the faith we have in Jesus Christ, and to live life excellently because of that faith.**

The relationship between Luke’s Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles (which also begins by addressing Theophilus) exactly reflects that dynamic. We see through Luke’s witness *what the community of believers can be when faith in Christ really takes hold of their hearts and lives.*

Six distinguishing characteristics of Luke’s Gospel (and what they call our parish to be):

- **Gospel of Mercy**
He emphasizes the compassion and patience of Jesus with sinners and the outcast – those who were not considered worthy of God or God’s mercy. (See the stories of the sinful woman, lost sheep and coin, prodigal son, good thief). Samaritans, gentiles, outcasts, tax collectors, public sinners – all are worthy of God’s mercy and forgiveness – and ours as well. *(A Reconciling community)*
- **Gospel of Universal Salvation**
See the Genealogy in the Infancy narrative (Luke 3:23-38) – Jesus is situated within the whole human race – traced back to Adam and not just to Abraham. Jesus died for all people. There’s room for everyone within God’s plan of salvation. *(A community of hospitality and welcome)*
- **Gospel of the Poor**
The “little people” play a prominent part in Luke’s gospel: Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, simple shepherds, Simeon and Anna. They are poor, not in the sense of material poverty, but of simple living and living simply dependent on God. These are the people who are most open to hearing the good news – and the challenge – of God’s word. *(A community of faithful stewardship – recognizing all that we have as being gift from God, nurturing it for the good of others, and sharing it, thereby making room for God to do more in our lives)*
- **Gospel of Absolute Renunciation**
Luke stresses the need for total dedication to Christ. His disciples must “leave *all* things” (Matthew & Mark don’t put it quite that radically) *(A community that puts discipleship in Christ above all else – if that quality of discipleship is not there, then nothing else makes sense).*

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- **Gospel of Prayer**

Luke shows Jesus at prayer more than any other evangelist – before every important moment in his public life and then some. *(A community of prayer – to know and love God through all the ways that we pray together, especially by our active and heartfelt participation in the Mass; to nurture also a daily lifestyle permeated by a constant turning to God in prayer)*

- **Gospel of Joy**

This characteristic pervades all of Luke’s writing – always filled with joy and wonder at what God has done: John the Baptist leaping for joy in Elizabeth’s womb; The Magnificat – these joyful explosions of praise are Luke’s alone. In Acts, he tells us several times that the disciples “could not help but be filled with joy” – even when they suffered persecution!!! *(A community that finds joy in our prayer, our discipleship, our mercy, our compassion – in Christ above all)*

Based on all the above, here is a proposed MISSION STATEMENT for Saint Luke Parish:

We rejoice in being among the people to whom Saint Luke wrote as “Dear Lovers of God.”¹

We will strive, therefore, to let the words of the Lord Jesus Christ burn within our hearts² and thereby to live the Good News in the tradition of our Patron Saint, Luke the Physician and Evangelist.

By striving to be a people of prayer, compassion, forgiveness and generosity, may we come to recognize the Risen Lord truly among us in the breaking of the bread and hasten to proclaim him to others by the witness of our lives.³

¹ cf. Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1

² cf. Luke 24:32

³ cf. Luke 24:35

Please take time to pray and reflect on this mission statement and offer your comments in the space below. You may return this form by mail or through any collection basket.

Name _____ Phone _____