

# The Vision, Mission, and Values of St. Dunstan's Anglican Church, Largo

**Vision Statement:** to see the world and especially the communities in which we live, work, and worship filled with disciples of Jesus Christ

**Mission Statement:** to abide in Christ through the Anglican tradition so that, filled with the Holy Spirit and living transformed lives, we may love and serve God and our neighbors as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.

## Our Values:

### 1. The Gospel

Any statement of our values as a church must begin with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-5). God created humanity to be in fellowship with him forever (Gen 1-2), but when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, humanity was cut off from God and the tree of life, and we began to die (Gen 3). However, God did not abandon us. He put a plan in motion to set the world to rights through Abraham and his offspring (Gen 12:1-3). This plan reached its climax (1) on the cross, when Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah and God incarnate, died for the sins of the whole world (Heb 9:6; 1 John 2:2), (2) on the first Easter Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 17:2-3), and (3) on the day that Jesus ascended to the right hand of God where he now rules as creation's only Lord and King (Col 3:1; Heb 12:2). This is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and what is left for us is to trust that Jesus Christ is who he says he is (John 7:38; 14:1), to repent of our sins (Mark 1:14-15), and to believe and live by faith the truth of the Gospel (Rom 1:17; Gal 2:20). There are many ways that followers of Christ can live the truth of the Gospel. As a church in the Anglican Church in North America, we choose to live the truth of the Gospel through the Anglican tradition.

### 2. Genuine Worship

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that the day is coming when genuine worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). This is what we strive to do in our worship of the Triune God. Our principle day of worship as a community is Sunday, the day of the week on which Jesus Christ rose from the dead (Luke 24:1-3), but worship is not something we do only once a week (Rev 4-5). Genuine worship is the cry of the Holy Spirit inside us calling back to the Father and the Son in thanksgiving, adoration, and praise (Phil 3:3). That is what it means to worship "in Spirit." But genuine worship must also be sincere and motivated by our love for God (Rom 5:5), and it must be doctrinally sound (Gal 1:8-9). We believe Sunday worship is for the people of God, but it is also our desire to make anyone who attends feel as welcome and comfortable as possible. So, we seek for our worship to be invitational without sacrificing orthodoxy or orthopraxy.

### 3. **Biblical Living**

As Anglicans, “We confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, containing all things necessary for salvation, and to be the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life.”<sup>1</sup> Because of what we believe about Scripture, we make Biblical Education an essential part of our life and ministry for all ages. This includes Biblical based preaching and Biblical Education in which the Word of God is taught and preached from a biblical-theological perspective with appropriate attention paid to the historical, cultural, linguistic, and geographical features of the text.

It is important to remember, however, that the Bible is not merely a collection of facts, poems, and stories to be read and studied. The purpose of reading and studying the Bible is to grasp a greater sense of the great metanarrative of Scripture and our role within that story. The Bible contains the true story about God, the world, and God’s plan to fix the world. We read and study the Bible to understand better our part to play in that story. We are, to use an analogy, in the final act of a play, and we all have a part to play in the unfolding of this divine drama. Act 1 is God’s creation of the world (Gen 1-2). Act 2 is humanity’s fall (Gen 3). Act 3 is the story of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (The OT). Act 4 is the story of Jesus, of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, through which he freed humanity from the curse and brought the story of Act 3 to a close (The Gospels). And now we are in the final act of this divine drama.

The final act began on Pentecost with the outpouring of the Spirit and the formation of the Church (Acts 2). The apostles were the first actors of this final act, and they set the path for all Christians who follow them. We know how the act will end, even more, how the whole play will end. There will be a new heaven and a new earth (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1), a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). There will be no more sin (Rom 6:10), no more death (1 Cor 15:26), and no more tears (Rev 21:4), and weapons of war will be turned into gardening tools (Isa 2:4). And so, now, we study all that has come before and all that is promised of the end, not simply for knowledge about the play, but for knowledge about ourselves and about the role we have to play in this great drama, this great story of God and the world. Understood this way, biblical education is not about the passing on of knowledge, but the passing on of a way of life.

### 4. **Transformed Lives and Communities**

Personal transformation, while a lifelong process, begins with the acceptance of God’s love and mercy through the atoning sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ (Heb 10:12). At the beginning of this process, we repent of our sins by confessing them to God (Acts 2:38). In repentance, a lifelong activity, we turn away from our sin and turn towards Christ (2 Pet 3:9), in whom we receive forgiveness from and reconciliation with the Father (vertical reconciliation; Rom 5:11), which in turns pushes us to pursue reconciliation with those we

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

have wronged individually and corporately (horizontal reconciliation; Matt 5:24). In Christ, we also receive the Holy Spirit through our baptism (1 Cor 12:13), and in Christ we pray continually to experience more truly the Holy Spirit's power in our lives (Rom 15:13). Those who live in and by the Spirit will demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit in their lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

However, personal transformation, or sanctification, is not an automatic occurrence in the life of the believer. We must work to become more like Christ knowing full well that whatever transformation we accomplish is not the result of our own striving, but the result of God working in us (Phil 2:12-13). We believe this spiritual journey is accomplished best not as individuals but as a multigenerational community of disciples of Jesus Christ. This does not mean, however, that you cannot practice sanctification on your own. As a community we promote the daily reading of the God's Word, daily prayer, and finding time for silence, solitude, and planned rest in which to listen to the Spirit's leading.

## 5. Perpetual Prayer

As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his crucifixion, his disciples slept. Jesus rebuked them, saying, "Could you not watch with me one hour?" (Matt 26:40). From this grew the regular prayers of monks and nuns known as the *hoare canonicae*, the "canonical hours." These prayers are attempts by the church to do what the disciples could not do, but the practice of praying eight times a day at three-hour intervals was not practical (or physically viable) for most people, and since all Christians are commanded to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17), Thomas Cranmer created the services we know today as Morning and Evening Prayer. These two prayer services, along with Midday Prayer and Compline, provide an opportunity for the Christian's day, beginning, middle, and end, to be saturated with prayer and praise and the reading of Holy Scripture.

But not everyone benefits from praying with the prayer book in the same way. Some benefit from more liturgical forms of prayer, and others from extemporaneous prayer. Some benefit more from corporate prayer, and others from private prayer. Some pray silently, and some pray aloud. What matters most is not that we use a specific form of prayer, but that we do what we can to fulfill Paul's command that we pray without ceasing. Speaking to our Heavenly Father through the Spirit in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is an essential activity for Christians. Ideally, praying should be like breathing. Every breath we take and every thought that we form in our heads should be in dialogue with our Heavenly Father because we need his special grace, mercy, and goodness if we are to be the people that he has called us to be. Recognizing this, it is essential that every Christian learn to call for that grace through prayer, especially the Lord's Prayer.

## 6. Unity through Christ

When God created humanity, he did not create multiple languages, ethnicities, cultures, or nations. These contemporary realities came about as the result of human sin (Gen 11:1-9). God created humanity to be united as his children, and he created and creates all human beings in his image (Gen 1:26-27; 9:6). The image of God is marred in all of us, but every person is a divine image bearer and therefore worthy of respect, compassion, understanding, love, and life. This truth has a special priority within the church because the church is to be the place where “the dividing wall of hostility” that exists between different people groups is torn down in Christ because “he himself is our peace” (Eph 2:12-14). As Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Jesus did not come to rescue only one segment of humanity, but people from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9), and so in John’s idealized vision of the church, he sees, “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne” and worshipping God together (Rev. 7:9-10). There is therefore no place in the world and especially in the church for racism and bigotry. We renounce those who seek to divide this nation, and we stand with those who seek to unite us as one people, especially those who strive to find that unity in Christ, which is the only place it may truly be found. The Church is to be the united body of Christ, and we lament the divisions within the Church. We believe that in Christ there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, and we long for the day when all the faithful in Christ will worship together the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## 7. Compassion and Care

Our compassion for others and our care for creation is founded on at least two biblical principles. First, our compassion for others is based on what Jesus refers to as the second great commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; cf. Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). When Jesus was asked in response, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan to answer this question. Put simply, the point of this parable is to say that “our neighbor” is not merely those in close social proximity to us but anyone whom we see in need or trouble. The Good Samaritan gave sacrificially to help the man whom the robbers had beaten, and so we believe in sacrificially loving those who we see in need or trouble, including feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned (Matt 25:31-46). We also believe that it is essential to protect and defend the weakest and most vulnerable among us: the unborn.

Our care for creations stems from the fact that God created this world and called it very good (Gen 1:31). Furthermore, but God created humanity in his image, which is another way of saying that God created humanity as the stewards of his creation. There are some Christians who believe that it is our destiny to leave this world behind for a different sort of

existence, but we believe that at the end of the great story of God and the world, the dead in Christ will rise again to live new, eternal lives on a transformed and renewed world. Therefore, there is a moral imperative placed upon us, both from the beginning of the story and from the end, to affirm the goodness of creation and the human body and to care for creation as humanity was intended to do. The whole earth is full of the glory of God (Isa 6:3), and we are the stewards of his creation tasked with respecting and caring for the earth and its citizens.

## **8. Missions and Evangelism**

Before he ascended to the right hand of God, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his Church its primary mission: “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). To fulfill this task, Christ poured out his Spirit on his Church, so that his disciples would be his witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Our mission as a church, therefore, must be both local and global. Locally, evangelism begins at the individual level. Through our lifestyle, our friendships, and our personal evangelism, we are Christ’s witnesses to those closest to us. We can make the love of Christ real and present for them, and this is the simplest form of the mission of the church. However, the mission of the church must happen at more than merely the individual level, and this is why we support local organizations and global ministries.