

NORTH PARK COVENANT CHURCH VERITAS

In January of 2009, North Park Covenant Church began the Veritas process. In the eighteen months to follow, twenty-one Veritas discussions were held with over one hundred congregants meeting to gain renewed vision regarding various areas of our church's life and ministry.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this process was the opportunity provided for all participants to share their perspectives on our life together as a congregation. During these initial conversations, more than half of the participants felt that our church was at a "Critical Moment" as defined in the Veritas program. Many people expressed anxiety about the future direction of the church, a longing for the vitality that existed in years past and a desire for revitalization.

In the weeks to follow, the group developed a Behavioral Covenant to help establish a safe, nurturing environment for sharing and discussion.

North Park Covenant Church – A Covenant for Our Life Together

Our covenant with one another is rooted in trust – trust in God's presence in Scripture and the Church – and in his grace for our journey together.

This bond with God and each other requires that...

-we communicate with each other clearly, completely, and directly – listening as well as speaking, and always with charity and humility.

-we accept both change and disagreement as normal and natural, always believing the best of each other and giving the benefit of the doubt.

-we recognize that we are all imperfect, broken and in need of grace and forgiveness – from God and each other.

-we are informed by our traditions, but open to change.

-we respect the views of all individuals, yet remain committed to the good of the whole Body.

This process of truth telling, reassessment, and renewal will remain a foundational part of our life together in Christ's Church.

The majority of the Veritas conversations to follow were centered around fellowship, worship and mission. A fourth area, Christian formation, was introduced, yet not fully explored. The church purpose statement served as a springboard for the selection these topics.

North Park Covenant Church Purpose Statement

The purpose of the church shall be to unite Christians in worship, fellowship, and service; to call persons to faith in Jesus Christ; and to propagate the Gospel through ministries of Christian formation, missions (local, regional and global), and the institutions of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its regional conferences.

In order to achieve this purpose, the church, in the unity of the Spirit, shall use the gifts that God has given it and the means of grace which God has placed at its disposal: the Word of God, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion.

The Veritas process was a very meaningful experience for our church body. In many instances, we were able to identify things about North Park Covenant Church that were valued. On the other hand, it became evident that some change is valuable and would be necessary in order for North Park Covenant Church to become a healthy-missional church. The following statements summarize our discussions in the areas of fellowship, worship, service and outreach and Christian formation.

Fellowship

As a church family, we genuinely value meaningful relationships with others in our church community. A sense of belonging to the community is most often felt while participating in common tasks and in worship. There is a willingness to help those in need, especially in times of crisis, and the accessibility of our building is an asset to the acceptance of all people.

We aspire to be more welcoming to newcomers and to make it easier for them to assimilate into the church family. This is of particular importance due to the transient nature of our newcomers often attending North Park University, the Seminary and those working with the denomination. Within our church family, we need to be more deliberate about encouraging fellowship through activities such as the All-Church Retreat, Small Groups etc. Lastly, we need to improve communication regarding programs and activities through the use of the website and prayer/information email chain.

Worship

As a church family, we value the importance of worship through the sacraments, liturgy, scripture, dynamic preaching, congregational singing, incorporation of children in worship, the lectionary and choral and organ music. We value the integration of these elements to form a cohesive worship service. We also strive to incorporate children in worship.

Without altering its basic character, we aspire to incorporate greater diversity and creativity in most aspects of worship – particularly in regards to musical styles and instruments, drama and visual arts, the use of sanctuary space, proclamation of the word and preaching style. In order to ensure

congregational participation and involvement in worship issues, a worship committee should support the pastor and or music director in planning and implementing worship services.

Service and Outreach

We value the relationships and programs that currently exist between our church and the following groups: The Evangelical Covenant Church, The Central Conference, North Park University and Seminary, the North Park neighborhood, Peterson Elementary School, The North Park Friendship Center and Covenant World Mission.

As a church family, we aspire to reach out to and serve the following groups of people: parents and families of neighborhood children participating in our church programs, clients of the Friendship Center, North Park University students and neighbors of different faiths and ethnicities. While supporting current outreach ministries, we also aspire to develop new outreach and service opportunities that compliment the gifts and talents of our church members. Lastly, we need to evaluate programs on an on-going basis to determine whether they are continuing to meet a genuine need.

Christian Formation

The Christian formation of children and youth is valued in our church. Significant resources are dedicated to the support and nurture of our children and youth through Sunday School, Confirmation, Youth Group, Vacation Bible School, the Preschool, etc.

We need to develop an awareness of the need for more intentional adult Christian formation and create a structure for these programs to flourish. Adult programming could take the form of small groups, bible studies, outreach activities etc.