

**Edina Community Lutheran Church
Strategic Plan 2021**

**Prepared for the Congregation
by the
Strategic Planning Task Force
March – May 2021**

1 June 2021

Edina Community Lutheran Church Strategic Plan 2021

(June 1, 2021)

The Edina Community Lutheran Church community celebrates our lives together and with others. We walk, hand in hand, with God's grace and the love of Jesus. We are bound together in one another's presence and in heart over distances. Our welcome, worship, and actions fulfill and renew us as we learn and grow together. We are enriched by the time and talents of our members, from the eagerness of the children to the wisdom of the elders. Our five priorities – relationships, capacity and financial vitality, justice, spirituality, and coming together after the trials of the pandemic – are interrelated and inseparable, echoing the voices of ECLC members. These priorities guide us as we look to the future as a beloved community.

Purpose

We give witness to love and justice at God's welcome table and in the world.

"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

- Amos 5:24

Priorities 2021 – 2024

Post-COVID Return: Create in the near term an inclusive, safe, welcoming re-entry to our life together as we emerge from COVID isolation.

Relationships: Build relationships within the ECLC community.

Capacity and Financial Vitality: Strengthen our capacity and financial vitality to best serve our ministries and fulfill our purpose.

Justice: Focus our justice work on racial, LGBTQIA+, and eco-justice issues, at home and beyond.

Spirituality: Develop deep spirituality in all aspects of our ministries and our life together.

Priorities and Actions 2021 – 2024

Priorities are what the congregation intentionally focuses on to “live” its purpose; *actions* are what the congregation *does* to carry out the priorities. Priorities and actions guide the congregation about where and how to focus its gifts and energy for the greatest impact. Priorities and actions can be changed when circumstances change, but they normally are used for the duration of the strategic plan.

Post-COVID Return: Create in the near term an inclusive, safe, welcoming re-entry to our life together as we emerge from COVID isolation.

Relationships: Build relationships within the ECLC community.

- Lovingly encircle all who seek our community—families and individuals, newcomers and long-timers, small to senior.
- Welcome, converse, and include.
- Support those in need.
- Encourage small groups of all kinds around shared interests.
- Continue activities such as house church, dinners, prayer circles, and more.

Capacity and Financial Vitality: Strengthen our capacity and financial vitality to best serve our ministries and fulfill our purpose.

- Care for and nourish our rostered leaders and staff.
- Lift up and honor our volunteers.
- Develop giving as a spiritual practice across all age groups.
- Satisfy our mortgage debt.
- Prepare and operate within multi-year budgets.
- Build resources to respond quickly to developing needs and unexpected opportunities for ministry.

Justice: Focus our justice work on racial, LGBTQIA+, and eco-justice issues, at home and beyond.

- Educate.
- Advocate.
- Serve and support, including financially.
- Pray and practice self-reflection and introspection.
- Deepen relationships with mission partners and sibling congregations.
- Be loving and humble, especially toward those whose perspectives differ.
- Refresh and renew our programs as we learn and grow.

Spirituality: Develop deep spirituality in all aspects of our ministries and our life together.

- Worship, sing, study and pray together in a way that advances deeper theological understanding.
- Express joy, vulnerability, and authenticity in all our activities and ministries.
- Provide faith formation, nurturing a childlike faith across all ages and stages.
- Organize activities and events outside of church that allow spiritual exploration in fellowship with one another.

- Develop awareness that our circle at the table leads us to service, and that service leads us back to our circle at the table.

Criteria for Considering New Initiatives

As we learn, grow, and serve together, we--members, staff, pastors, and lay leaders--are inspired to develop new programs and activities and to renew and refresh others. To ensure that any new or refreshed initiative will be successful and sustainable, it must meet these criteria before it can be advanced and adopted:

- Supports the mission.
- Advances measurable progress on one or more of the five priorities.
- Has a clear place and “fit” within the organization/governance structure.
- Can be supported with our financial resources.
- A staff member or supported layperson has capacity to manage the initiative.
- A critical mass of volunteers supports and intends to sustain the initiative.

The Planning Process

In February 2021, a committee was formed to coordinate strategic planning for ECLC. The purpose of this group was to analyze the current situation, receive input and insights from the congregation, and identify the purpose and priorities for this congregation for the next three years. Consultant Lynn Moline of Lynn Moline Associates, Inc. guided the committee through the process. The committee met every week for one hour through May.

The first step was to gather input from the congregation to seek the wisdom, wishes, and insights of the congregation about ECLC's mission and priorities. This, among other inputs, informed and guided the committee's planning.

Many listening post opportunities were offered to the congregation--Zoom meetings in which the participants named aspects of our congregational life that worked well, what mattered to them, what they'd want to continue to do, and which activities could be eliminated. One of those listening posts was specifically for ECLC youth. Almost 100 people participated. The team also reviewed the ECLC Constitution and By-laws, read the work done during the last two calls for pastors, and held conversations with other individuals. Notes from all the listening posts were compiled and read by the committee members. Some committee members drew visual representations, and our consultant made a Word Cloud.

Next, a subset of the committee worked on drafting a purpose statement. Those drafts were reviewed and discussed by the committee at several meetings. We wanted to capture the idea that we gather together around God's welcome table--clearly an important image to many people--which compels us to our work in the world. Our work in the world then propels us to gather again at the table in an infinite ebb and flow of service and prayer.

The purpose statement we finally selected is concise and captures the reason Edina Community Lutheran Church exists: "We give witness to love and justice at God's welcome table and in the world." Love and justice were two words used frequently in the listening posts as members described our congregation. The reference to the words of Amos is so strong that we also added them:

"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

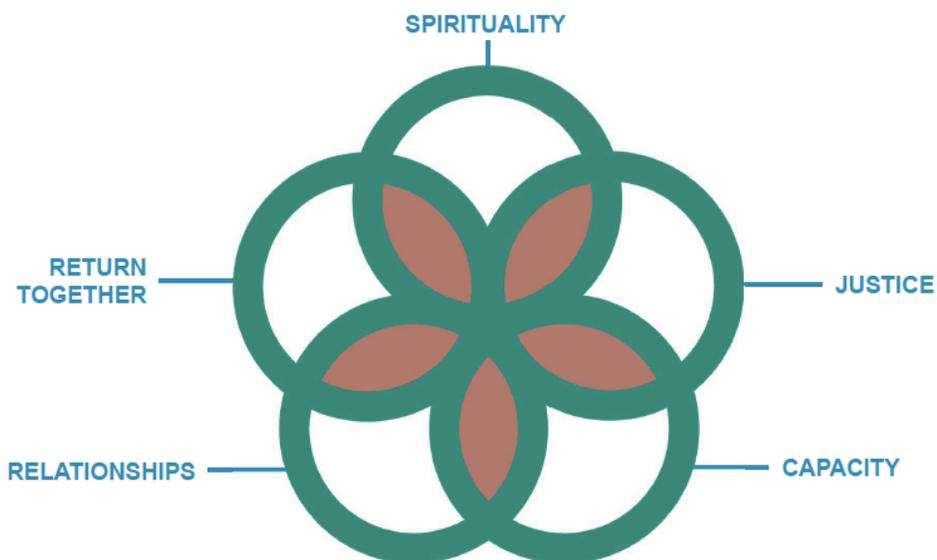
- Amos 5:24



Word cloud created from the congregation's comments during listening posts during the winter of 2021.

Having coalesced on the purpose statement, the planners turned their attention to determining what ECLC's most important priorities should be over the coming three years. Priorities, once agreed upon, guide decisions about the kinds of programs, services, and activities the congregation will focus on. The priority setting process began with identifying internal and external factors that are likely to impact ECLC over the period. What opportunities are likely to present themselves to us in the next few years? What are ECLC's gifts and strengths? In what ways is ECLC vulnerable? What conditions in the world around us may be threats to our purpose and vitality? In addition to answering questions like these, the team also returned to the listening post notes for the congregation's insights about priorities. Thus informed, the planners engaged over several meetings in a process of brainstorming and discussing a wide range of possible priorities. Ultimately, the planners reached consensus on the five priorities listed in this document.

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Next, the team determined what general kinds of activities (or tactics) would be the most impactful in fulfilling each of the priorities. In a world of endless inspiration, needs, and opportunities, priorities with defined tactics help the congregation determine where and how to focus its gifts and energy for the greatest impact. The activities identified for each priority are listed beneath each one.

Finally, to help the congregation to further refine its focus, the team developed a short list of criteria for inclusion in the strategic plan. Criteria are the guidelines suggested for ECLC's

use whenever new or renewed programs and services are proposed. The use of criteria helps ensure that all activities ECLC engages in will further our purpose, make appropriate use of the congregation's time and talents, and be sustainable.

Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee Members

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