

## St. Luke's North Park Mission Statement

Create spaces for God to form life-changing relationships with Christ and each other across lines of prejudice and privilege.

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### Our Rule of Life (DRAFT)

Jesus says to each of us, "Follow me."

So we Christians try our best to follow. Here's how:

- **Pray daily.** We strive to make more and more space to be with God in conversation, contemplation, and loving action.
- **Gather weekly.** On Sundays we gather to celebrate God's work in the world and remind ourselves of our place within that story. During the week we gather in discipleship groups to share the joys and challenges of our walk with Christ.
- **Give generously.** All that we have and all that we are belongs to God, so we aspire to live just and generous lives that reflect that truth. Jesus invites those of us with worldly power to give it away as we bless others, and those of us with little power in this world to be raised up into abundant life.
- **Share your story.** We name God's grace working in our lives and the world and share those stories with those whom we befriend.

We walk this path with humility and when we fall we help each other back up again. In our experience, the truths found through these practices set us free to live the lives of abundance God dreams for each of us. But don't take our word for it -- take Jesus' invitation and walk with us.

***And no matter who you are and where you are on your journey of faith -- you are welcome to participate fully in all that we do here.***

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## St Luke's North Park Core Values (Draft)

### We are a community of:

**Rich diversity:** We trust God's in-breaking Reign to be filled with the widest array of languages, cultures, and peoples -- all of whom are beloved children of God. We reject the labels society uses to divide us in order to maintain the privileges of some at the expenses of others. We discover the truth of our own God-granted power and society-granted privilege and use them together, with Christ's help, to move beyond the nightmares of our own devising, and into the dream of God's intending.

**Warm hospitality:** We welcome all God's children home in all that we say and do, and we carry that hospitality out into the world through our openness to inviting those we meet into a relationship with God and St. Luke's.

**Joyful trust:** We are grounded by our trust in God, and we worship God with praise, joy, and spirit-filled music.

**Curious courage:** We ask God for the courage to take risks, and we care for and learn from each other when we fail. Before we ask others to do something we have done it ourselves, and we encourage and support each other as we wonder new possibilities into being and tackle them together.

**Life-changing relationships:** Our improbable and transformative walks with Jesus give us the strength, patience, and humility to overcome the awkwardness and misunderstandings of new relationships across lines of privilege and prejudice. Such friendships with God and each other change our lives in heartbreaking and glorious ways.

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## St. Luke's North Park Discipleship Group Meeting Liturgy

*Authored in large part by David Tremaine*

### Gather (15 min)

#### Open the Discussion

Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you would, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP 832-33)

Welcome to tonight's gathering of this St. Luke's Discipleship Group. We gather in order to share with each other the joys and challenges of our relationship with God, no matter where we find ourselves on that journey. We are here to support one another, to share and to listen, and in doing so it is important for each of us to cultivate an inviting, safe, and sacred space, with the expectation that what we now choose to share with each other will stay in this room. When we share, we commit to one another to use "I" statements and to speak only for ourselves.

### **Our Rule of Life (10 min)**

Would someone please read the group Rule of Life?

Jesus says to each of us, "Follow me." So we try our best to follow. Here's how:

- We pray daily. We strive to make more and more space to be with God in conversation, contemplation, and loving action.
- We gather weekly. On Sundays we gather to celebrate God's work in the world and remind ourselves of our place within that story. During the week we gather in discipleship groups to share the joys and challenges of our walk with Christ.
- We give generously. All that we have and all that we are belongs to God, so we aspire to live just and generous lives that reflect that truth. Jesus invites those of us with worldly power to give it away as we bless others, and those of us with little power in this world to be raised up.
- We share our stories. We name God's grace working around us and share those stories with those whom we befriend.

We walk this path with humility and when we fall we help each other back up again. In our experience, the truths found through these practices set us free to live the lives of abundance God dreams for each of us, so we invite one another take Jesus' invitation and we walk together. And no matter who you are and where you are on your journey of faith -- you are welcome to participate fully in all that we do here.

This is our rule of life. It is what we are about as we try our best to follow Jesus' way. What has been wonderful or challenging about your spiritual practices of prayer, gathering, giving, and sharing stories during the past week?

### **Read and Respond to Sacred Words (25 minutes)**

*[This is usually focused on the past Sunday's sermon and gospel.]*

### **Individual Sharing (25 minutes)**

Now we are going to transition into a time for sharing consolations and desolations from this past week. Consolations are experiences in the last week when we could feel God's movement in our lives. Desolations feel instead like desert places, times when we struggled to feel God's movement -- even though we can be certain that God was there all the same. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is required. This also means that when someone has finished sharing there may be a period of silence, which may be uncomfortable, but can also be a very sacred thing. We are all invited to lean into the discomfort of silence, rather than needing to fill it with words just for the sake of ending it. Please share no more than 3-5 minutes so that everyone has a chance to share. If time permits we may share again. Our gift to each other during this time is to listen deeply and not to offer any response or advice. Please open your sharing by saying, "I have a consolation/desolation to share" and say at the end, "Thank you for listening." Together we will respond, "May God be with you." (Or "Thank you for sharing")

### **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

We gathered in order to share with each other the joys and challenges of our relationship with God, no matter where we find ourselves on that journey. As we invite others into this space in the weeks to follow, we will discern together when it is time to create a new group alongside this one. Now let us stand, hold hands, and pray. Let us remember that we are in the presence of God. God, we pray for our own needs and the needs of others, as well as for those we hope to invite into this space with us. . . . *[Lord's prayer together.]* Amen.

### **Break Bread (10 minutes)**

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## **Prepared Notes for General Convention Webinar on Evangelism, April 12, 2018**

*by The Revs. Laurel and Colin Mathewson*

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Thank you for the opportunity to share our experience with you! Colin and I were ordained five years ago and have served as co-pastors of St Lukes for 18 months. Our ministry is the recipient of a church planting grant. While lots of wonderful things have happened and are in the works

here, we realize that our time at St Lukes has been short -- many more surprises await. We have great hope for the future of the church and have been witnessing this hope bear fruit here.

St Lukes was planted by a nearby Episcopal congregation in 1923 in a just-forming suburb of San Diego called North Park, purchasing a significant lot size that almost a hundred years later is nearly dead center in one of the city's hottest, hipster neighborhoods. A great example of the value of strategic land banking in new development areas! St Luke's enjoyed its heyday as the Baby Boomers grew up and entered a gradual decline in the 80s and 90s. In the late 90s, a number of Sudanese refugees began arriving in San Diego, were familiar with Anglican tradition and looked to the church for help getting settled into the community. St Luke's, not without struggle, opened its arms to these newcomers, who over the following decades brought their extended families here as well. In fact, by the late 2000s St Luke's was majority Sudanese-American -- and became a mission of the diocese because, as a predominantly working class congregation, it could no longer afford a full-time priest. Several years of very part-time clergy leadership followed, but the congregation remained vital as it served as one of the few cultural centers for Sudanese Americans in the region.

Bishop James Mathes decided to take a chance on us and raised money to support our work at St Luke's for five years through major donors and the diocesan budget. The church planting grant provided another crucial source of support to give us a stable platform to build from and the time to do it in. We each work three-quarters time -- combined this is six times the clergy support than what the congregation, which had been hovering around 70 ASA for several years, had known. Our 2017 ASA was 102 and our attendance over the past four months has been closer to 120.

What's made this growth possible, besides the investment in time spent tending to the many possibilities of this place, is the graciousness and capability of our lay leadership. And the congregation's sense of potential closure -- which was in many ways a near-death experience-- created an openness to experimentation that has made possible a welcome environment for newcomers -- most of whom have been our white neighbors and a growing group of newly arrived Congolese refugees. What was a 90% Sudanese congregation two years ago is now closer to 60% Sudanese American, 25% white, and 15% Congolese American. That's a lot of change, especially considering that the Congolese refugees speak Swahili, many of the older Sudanese Americans speak Arabic and English and their kids are English dominant. As you can imagine, Sunday morning worship is beautiful and messy: the liturgy is in English with a gospel proclamation in Arabic, a Swahili interpreter for the sermon and announcements, and songs in Swahili, Arabic, and English.

While Colin and I love and are fed by the Eucharist, we wanted to experiment with new forms of “being church” that might be compelling to millennials. To that end, a VTS graduate and lay formation director at nearby St. Paul’s Cathedral, David Tremaine, started a young adult mentoring program that in its second year is evolving into one of our first weekly small group opportunities at St Lukes. It has been lovely and surprising to watch this small community develop -- and I’ve been struck by what participants are getting out of it -- and how the experience is keeping them engaged with the role God is playing in their lives even as they aren’t tending to come to Sunday worship more than they did previously -- once a month or so. That fact feels alright to me, particularly because the structure of these small group meetings is eucharistic and these young adults are growing in their faith. In fact, we’re ready to invest even more of our attention and time into small group development as our chief means of pastoral care, Christian formation, and lay leadership development at St Lukes.

The book that most helped us in our thinking in this regard was *The Church in Many Houses* by Steve Cordle. It comes from a nondenominational and somewhat conservative evangelical worldview that may require some on-the-spot translation to your particular context, but the core invitation is great. It introduces the reader to the concept of the cell group, an open, ongoing small group that is intentional in its leadership development and evangelical outlook so that groups are self-multiplying. These groups become one “wing” of what it means to be church together -- the other “wing” being Sunday worship. Small groups reinforce Sunday worship by creating a space for participants to reflect on last Sunday’s sermon and its Bible readings. We believe these smaller group spaces can serve as more natural “come-with-me” invitation spaces than a visit to Sunday morning worship might offer -- especially given that traditional Eucharistic liturgy can strike an unchurched person, or someone unfamiliar with structured liturgical worship, as quite unintelligible. We’re planning to launch small groups in Arabic and Swahili soon, too.

Not wanting the fundamentally working class identity of St Luke’s to change, we realized that we would need to maximize the use of the property gifted to us from previous generations to generate a rental income stream to supplement our pledge and plate giving. This has led us into a series of community partnerships that have been wonderful blessings. A faith-based homeless services nonprofit works out of the space below our office, making us the center of North Park’s population of those experiencing homelessness. And they pay us rent! We also invited a Nazarene church plant to worship in our sanctuary between our two services -- besides paying rent, they’ve also updated our sound system and built a playground in our courtyard -- and we’ve slowly started to work together on joint youth programming, too. Finally, we’ve partnered with the International Rescue Committee to run a youth urban farming program on our vacant adjacent lot and are raising money for a commercial kitchen upgrade that will bring in their refugee women’s culinary arts job training program. Anything around

food and farming is especially alluring to those neighborhood millennials we want to meet, and our garden has made possible a good number of such conversations!

Again, thank you for this opportunity tonight. We are deeply grateful for the church planting grant we've received that helped extend the initial subsidized run of our planting and redevelopment work to five years, which we believe is a *minimum* amount of time a diocese needs to give leaders in this entrepreneurial work to find a financially sustainable path forward. We've made a copy of this presentation, our identity documents, and our small group liturgical structure available for your use. Hope you'll stay in touch with us at [stlukesnorthpark.org/join](http://stlukesnorthpark.org/join)  
Blessings to you!