

CHURCH PLANTING – STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Contact

We'd love to talk with you about mission and church planting in the Molonglo Valley. If you'd like to get involved, would like more information, or have questions, please contact:

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As you read this, consider...

- Is God calling me to be part of the church planting team?
- What resonates with the gifts God has given me?
- What can I pray for the church planting team, even if I am not part of it?
- Can I support the church plant in some way, even if just for a season?

What We're Aiming For

Following God's leading and the Spirit's calling, we are praying and working towards a new, self-sustaining worshipping community forming in the Molonglo Valley. As a community, we do not simply intend to welcome not-yet-believers to worship gatherings, but to go out and actively seek to build connections with those outside the church.

Together and individually, we will:

- **Evangelise:** Actively seek to share our faith evangelistically, inviting not-yet-believers to come to know salvation in Jesus Christ.
- **Disciple:** Support one another in our faith. We will speak the Gospel to one another, encourage one another in faithfulness, practice self-examination and non-judgementalism, and bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:1-5).
- **Bless the community:** Participate in community events, partner with community organisations, and seek to address unmet needs in the community as we have capacity and gifting, without seeking anything in return.
- **Worship:** Gather in community around the Word and Sacrament, to be shaped, renewed, and sent into God's world.

Commitments

As part of the church planting team, we each commit to do these things with the Spirit's help:

- Treating this as our primary church community. This may mean being released from serving in your existing church community, to have sufficient time/energy for church planting.
- Regularly participating in a Gospel Community, with a rhythm of dwelling in God's word, encouraging one another in the Gospel, and seeking to bless the community around us.
- Engaging in community events and groups and actively seeking to grow relationships with not-yet-Christians.

- Seeking to grow in speaking God's promises to your own heart, to fellow believers and to not-yet-Christians around you.
- As you are able, financially supporting the development of this new church.
- Promoting the unity of this new community of faith: avoiding gossip and speaking honestly.

A Growing Structure

We envision the church plant gathering in three different ways: Gospel Pairs/Triplets, Gospel Communities, and for Gospel-centred Worship. Each of these gatherings are places into which we can invite not-yet-Christians, where we can grow in our discipleship, hear the Gospel and share service together. Members of the church plant team are encouraged to be active in at least two of these gatherings.

Gospel Pairs/Triplets consist of two or three people meeting at least fortnightly. Together you reflect on scripture, encourage, and support one another, and pray for each other and people you know.

Gospel Communities are a group of 6-25 meeting together weekly. We connect with the people around us, looking for opportunities to bless our neighbours and share Gospel invitations.

Gospel-centred Worship is a larger gathering around the Word and Sacrament, to be shaped, renewed, and sent. Together we will praise, pray and welcome new believers in baptism. Initially, worship won't be advertised – it will just be something we do. But when the time is right, we will transition to weekly public worship, in a public venue (such as a community centre or school hall). We don't want to do this too early, because we don't want to put all our energy into a weekly event – we want to make sure we still have energy margin for engaging in mission together.

Beyond Public Worship

Our aim is not to simply start a 'new Lutheran congregation' formed of existing Christians. It is to work alongside the Spirit, introduce people to Christ, welcome new believers, and evangelise a church into being. Once a new congregation has been planted, this work continues. Commencing public worship is not the 'end point' of the missional journey but creates a new sending church! We pray that Gospel Communities will continue to grow, and the new church will be in a position to support Gospel Communities in other areas of Canberra to grow into their own worshipping community.

Theological Core

The Gospel

We believe that the Gospel is a gift – it is not that we chose God, but he chose us. God has rescued us from sin and brought us into right relationship with him and all of creation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 15:6; Eph 2:8-10; 1 John 4:10). This is the salvation which is to be proclaimed to all the nations (Matt 28:19; Luke 3:6; Acts 13:47). There is no-one who is disqualified from hearing this good news; God desires all to be saved and turn to him in repentance (Eph 2:11-22; 2 Pet 3:9).

Baptism

We believe that baptism is the visible sign through which God welcomes people into the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). In baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection (Rom 6:1-11) and brought into the community of faith. Baptism is not a work of our faith, but a gift of God. It is not our choice of a life for God, but his choice of us to be his people and our acceptance of God's promises in Christ Jesus. If an unbaptised person repents and turns to God, there is no reason why they should not be baptised. Although we may reject God's gift, baptism remains eternally valid. Therefore when a baptised person repents and returns to faith there is no reason to be baptised again.

The church as the community of faith has the duty and responsibility to prepare people who wish to be baptised so that they are aware of the promises of God which they are receiving. The church also has the responsibility to care for, nurture, and disciple all baptised people in their faith. Because baptism is God's work and not ours, we will practice the baptism of infants. However, these responsibilities of the church mean that the parents/guardians of infants who are baptised should have a connection to the church community.

In this life we remain both saint and sinner. In baptism we receive God's promise, but our baptism will only be finally completed in our physical death and resurrection to new life. The Christian life is a life of repentance, where God constantly returns us to the promise of our baptism. In our worship gatherings we will practice confession regularly and be reminded of God's grace through the Gospel.

Communion

We believe that Communion is more than simply a fellowship meal. It is where believers are united in receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ to strengthen us in our walk of faith and life together as a community. The words of Jesus, "this is my body," "this is my blood," mean what they say. While the bread and wine do not cease to be bread and wine, they are also the embodied presence of Christ to us, received by faith. We will celebrate communion together frequently as part of worship, and any baptised person who wishes to receive is welcome at the table.

The authority of Scripture

We believe that books of the Old and New Testament are God's Word, written through human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The primary purpose of Scripture is to witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, so that all may know the Gospel. It is "the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged ... Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture."¹

We affirm and teach the *Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture* adopted by the Lutheran Church of Australia's General Synod in 1987.²

¹ *Formula of Concord: Epitome*, paragraph 1.

² See: <https://lca.box.com/shared/static/bqxcab558yvm72w9yau8vr1ra13kh115.pdf>

Creeds of the Church

We affirm the confessions of faith found in the ancient creeds of the church, commonly referred to as the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed. We regard anyone who confesses these creeds as a Christian brother or sister: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3).

The Lutheran Confessions

We affirm the confessions which form the *Book of Concord* (1580) as a summary and correct exposition of the Word of God. The confessions are not themselves God’s Word, and do not speak with the authority of Scripture. However, they nevertheless possess real authority as a correct interpretation of Scripture.

Denominational Affiliation

When the new worshipping community is self-sustaining, we will apply for membership as a congregation of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand.

Until this point is reached, the church planting project is a ministry of Immanuel Woden Valley Lutheran Church (IWVLC). We accept the governance of the IWVLC Board of Leadership and the authority of its Pastor. Members of the church plant community will be considered members of IWVLC for administrative purposes.