

Mission: What and How

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Mission is a congregation's ministry to the wider world, publicly witnessing to the congregation's purpose and vocation. Mission matches calling - the congregation's calling. It expresses the ways in which a faith community seeks to heal, change, and transform the world touched by the congregation.

The mission of a congregation is to live its vision through compassionate actions. Mission answers the question - **“What are we called to do?”** – where “we” is a consensus of the congregation. For example: vigilant public witness for justice, peace, and sustainability, and compassionate community service. A mission *statement* clarifies the commitments a congregation chooses for living its vision. More fully stated, that question becomes, **“Knowing who we are, where we are, and the passions to which we are committed, what effect do we want our congregation to create?”** Mission-oriented activities strive toward a positive lasting effect.

To fully participate in the shared mission and ministry of a congregation, members are asked to develop and sustain three essential practices:

- 1) **Discern the gifts of ministry that call members forth, engaging their individual ethical and spiritual passions,**
- 2) **See with the eyes of the soul and feel with the mind and heart, and**
- 3) **Gather those individual gifts into communities of gifts within the congregation.**

Gifts of ministry fuel creativity and service. They flow forward when tapped into and unleashed in a supportive setting. Seeing and feeling with soulful empathy unites a person with the needs of the other, whether the other is a fellow human or group of people, or other living organisms, including whole ecosystems and communities. Prophetic witness and compassionate action naturally follow from feeling the needs of the other.

With these skills of discernment and perception awakened and engaged, members join with other members in the congregation who share a similar calling. Together they become a community centered on that calling and practice. A congregation consists of several “communities of practice,” developing the various gifts of the congregation. The work of each community of practice becomes a ministry of the congregation where members collaborate in taking their passions and gifts into the world.

Through shared ministry in the Beloved Community of Faith, congregation members live out their callings, touching and changing the world with prophetic, transformative vision. The mission of a congregation is to live its vision through skillful compassionate practices.