

Mission Statement:

The mission of my life is to delight in the fellowship that is mine with my Creator now and forever because of his eternal Son, and, until I am home with my Heavenly Father, to be a grace-focused glimpse of him to all whom he puts into my sphere of influence in the hope that they too might continue or begin to delight in that same fellowship with him now and forever and to continue or begin imitating him with me.

Core Beliefs:

1. I have been given fellowship as a dear son of my Heavenly Father only by the perfect substitutionary life and death of his eternal Son which his Holy Spirit has taught me to believe and to delight in through his powerful means of grace.
2. I am called and empowered by the gospel of Jesus Christ to keep constant watch on my life and doctrine so that God can use me as a grace empowered tool in reaching the freely given goal of my salvation and the salvation of others he puts into my life.
3. Only by a daily return to my baptism - the daily death of my old self and the resurrection of the new - will I have the strength and wisdom to grasp the glory of what God has called me to be as his child and heir and mask. This means that the means of grace are my daily lifeline and food for my soul.
4. I believe that I can never too well grasp two things: a) the depth of the self-focused wickedness of my natural heart; and b) the still always greater width, length, height, and depth of Christ's love for me. Probing those two mysteries is at the heart of all true growth in sanctification.
5. In prayer I am privileged in Christ to speak to and be heard by my Father as his dear child for myself and others he puts into my life, just as the Son always intercedes for me at his Father's side, just as the Spirit whose temple I am ceaselessly intercedes.
6. In restoration to fellowship with God as my dear Abba Father (the restoration of the vertical dimension of the image of God in my Lord Jesus) I have also been given back the privilege of being a glimpse of him - his mask! - to all whom he permits me to have influence in my life (the restoration of the horizontal dimension of the image of God in my Lord Jesus).
7. Because as a child of God in Jesus I am also called to be God's mask in all of life, all of life in every venue has become a high and holy ground of royal service to my God as I serve the neighbors he brings into my life.
8. All of my special, specific ongoing callings in life (brother, husband, father, grandfather, professor, director of continuing education, congregation member, member of the WELS) are equally high and holy callings as gifts from my God for the purpose of being a glimpse of him in those callings.
9. Every day of my time of grace - the length of which is known only to my God and Savior - God has prepared in advance work for me to do. The key is not so much to create those opportunities as to recognize and seize them as God presents them. These opportunities tend to show up in the ordinary tasks of my vocations.

Guiding principles:

1. Live confronted, warned, and guided by the beauty of God's law but seek to draw strength to live only from the gospel.
2. Be recharged in the power of the means of grace every day.
3. Learn to pray through the Scriptures so as to mimic my Father as I speak to him.
4. Learn to see every moment of life as an opportunity for ongoing conversation with my God.
5. Be a concrete glimpse to all in my life of the unconditional love that I know in my Savior.
6. Live with the same generosity towards others in all life's blessings (financial resources, talents and skills, time, etc.) that God has shown to me.
7. Treasure the gift of the body of Christ by enjoying fellowship with others and receiving with a grateful heart their service to me as God's masks.
8. Look for every opportunity to speak of the saving truth of Christ to the ears of others knowing full well that the opportunity may often come only after God has used me to be a glimpse of Christ to their eyes.
9. Strive to live with the same patience towards others that God has shown to me.
10. Never urge others to self-denial and self-discipline without first checking in the mirror whether self-denial and self-discipline is in evidence in my own heart and life.
11. Seek to reflect the peace and joy that is mine in Jesus even when tears stain my cheeks.
12. Ask God as I interact with others each day to understand how to be the most useful (the biblical concept of kindness) to them in that moment he has given me with them.
13. Learn how to embrace being both wise as a serpent and as gentle/innocent as a dove.
14. Embrace cheerfully whatever cross my heavenly Father chooses to bring into my life without falling into the self-made martyr trap of fashioning my own crosses.
15. Recognize that the gift of rest and recreation is also a part of living by faith and not by sight as I trust that God is always at work, even when I am resting from my labors.
16. Refuse to live as a Docetist by taking care of my physical and emotional health through regular exercise (aerobic and resistance training) and making wise choices about what I eat and drink.
17. While resting secure that the verdict of "well pleased" has been spoken over me by my Heavenly Father because of Jesus, learn how to live from the gospel while still refusing to rest in "good enough" in any of my callings until, by grace alone, I have heard my Savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Life Goals

1. To be a clay jar mask of God as a husband/father/grandfather who nurtures in my family (wife, children, their spouses, grandchildren, their spouses, and great-grandchildren) no greater delight than the grace of Christ and no greater purpose than to live for him in their life callings according to their unique gifts from God for the blessing of all those he puts around them.

2. To be a clay jar mask of God as a professor of homiletics who nurtures in all my students (M.Div. students and pastors) a desire to always strive for a clearer understanding of gospel predominance in all its facets and for a greater insight and skill to proclaim the truths of law and gospel with all the vivid richness of their biblical texts.
3. To be a clay jar mask of God to assist more pastors to excel under the cross in faithful public ministry and royal priestly service as they continue to grow spiritually and as they continue to partner with others to maximize their God-given strengths in all their unique callings in life.
4. To be a clay jar mask of God in the life goal (or goals) of which I am not even aware, but that may be the main reason God has given me life and breath on this earth. In heaven, I will thank God for what he achieved apart from my awareness of the goal(s).

Specific Current God-Given Roles Where God Has Made Me His Mask and My Statement of Purpose in Each of Those Roles

Child and Heir of the Triune God

Continue to grow in faith in wisdom through regular personal and corporate use of the means of grace as well as casting all my personal and vocational cares on him since he cares for me and those he has given me to love.

Steward of Health/Strength

Be a wise steward of God's gift of physical and emotional health by maintaining a healthy diet and getting sufficient rest and exercise so that I have the physical energy and strength and focus to devote to all my other callings.

Husband

Be one of God's tools to supply Sue's spiritual, physical, and emotional needs so as to help her thrive in all her God-given callings as a child and heir of God. Also cherish the assistance she can be to me as God's tool to encourage me in my callings.

Father/Grandfather

Be one of God's tools to supply my children's (including daughters-in-law) and grandchildren's spiritual, physical, and emotional needs so as to help them thrive in all their callings as children and heirs of God. Also, cherish the assistance they can be to me as God's tools to encourage me in my callings.

Son-in-Law/Brother/Uncle (extended family Gurgel and Zink)

Be one of God's tools to supply my extended family's spiritual, physical, and emotional needs so as to help them thrive in all their callings as children and heirs of God. Cherish the assistance they can be to me as God's tools to encourage me in my callings.

Friend

Be one of God's tools to supply my friends' spiritual, physical, and emotional needs so as to help them thrive in all their callings as children and heirs of God. Cherish the assistance they can be to me as God's tools to encourage me in my callings.

Neighbor

Be alert each day to the opportunities God gives to prove myself a loving and compassionate neighbor to those God puts across my path as well as trust that in ways beyond my understanding God is using them as blessings to me as well.

Calvary Member

Pray for my pastors and other called workers and lay leaders while being prepared to use my gifts and abilities in our corporate ministry as God-given time and energy permit, while also always seeking in interactions with members and visitors to speak and act in such a way that I am God's tool to further the ministry we carry out together in Christ's name, giving evidence that I do see everyone in the congregation as my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Member of the WELS

Pray for the leaders, called workers, and members of my synod that God would keep us faithful to and with his truth for the benefit of all whom God may allow our ministry to touch, while also being prepared to serve according to my gifts and abilities as God-given time and energy permit.

Pulpit Assistant at Mt. Lebanon

Preach the word faithfully, beautifully, and courageously so as to be God's tool to further the mission he has given to Mt. Lebanon and be a gracious glimpse of Christ in my individual interactions with them when I am in their midst.

Professor of Homiletics

Continue to develop my own knowledge and skill in the science and art of preaching in the 21st century and in the knowledge and skill of teaching adults so that I can communicate the task of preaching clearly and persuasively in the classroom as well as guide individual students/pastors with wisdom, patience and honesty as they craft and preach their sermons.

Faculty (and Senior Thesis) Advisor of MDiv and STM Students

Continue to develop the skills of a Christian mentor/coach so as to help individual students and their spouses before and after graduation to continue to mature in all their callings as children and heirs of God.

Colleague on the Faculty

Treasure the wisdom and gifts of my brothers on the faculty whom God has given as a blessing to me and seek to be a blessing to them with the wisdom and gifts God has given me.

Director of Grow in Grace

Promoter of Continuing Education

Be a regular and enthusiastic voice for encouraging the pastors and other called workers of our synod to make use of all the opportunities they have to continue to grow spiritually and in service in all their unique callings from God.

Continue to help synodical, district, circuit, and congregational leaders to grow in their understanding of the importance of lifelong spiritual, royal priestly, and professional growth for the pastors whom they serve.

Planner and Developer of Comprehensive Program through WLS and in the WELS

Listen carefully to seminary and synodical leaders, seminary colleagues, lay leaders, and especially to the voices of those carrying out the public ministry within our church body so as to lead the planning, development and implanting of a comprehensive program of continuing education that offers a rich variety of both formal and informal opportunities that assist called workers in growing spiritually as well as growing in all their unique God-given callings according to their unique God-given gifts.

Instructor/Presenter of Continuing Education Retreats/Courses/Events

Continue to grow in the knowledge and skill that enables me to be a wise and encouraging teacher of adults and put that to work in presentations, workshops, and courses on campus, at satellite locations, and online.

Leader of the Grow in Grace Team

Be a Christ-like leader who continually seeks to build an ever growing network of gifted partners who share with me the mission and vision of Grow in Grace and who partner with me as God's tools to carry out Grow in Grace's goals. Nurture all those partners toward lifelong growth in their skills and competencies for the benefit of all their callings and so that the work of Grow in Grace can continue to expand and thrive under God's blessing long after this cracked clay jar is gone from the face of the earth.