

Pastor Marc Miller,
Director for Evangelical Mission, NW Ohio Synod
Winter Conference Meetings 2010
IMAGINE

IMAGINE...

IMAGINE...God's will being done..in you...in us...in our congregations...
in our church...in our world...as it is in heaven

IMAGINE...Jesus, present in our daily walk...in our congregations...
in the face of the least of these

IMAGINE...God, here now, in the midst of us, speaking gracious words,
words of peace... "You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased."

IMAGINE...each of us, each of our congregations, this synod,
this Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
feeling courageous and confident, acting in faith instead of fear,
knowing that we "can do all things through the one who strengthens
(us)"

IMAGINE...our congregations and our church recapturing our missional
"mojo",

believing that Jesus Christ, the one who has conquered death,
gives us all we need to be the church in mission

IMAGINE...pastors and all rostered leaders alive in Christ and growing
in faith and generosity, with a burning desire to share the gospel with
others

IMAGINE...motivated, committed, spiritually growing lay people who see
themselves

as leaders of our vibrant mission to the world

IMAGINE...our congregations understanding that they are
radically embraced by the grace of God,
radically confronted with the need for repentance and healing,
and radically challenged to be growing as disciples of Jesus Christ

IMAGINE...seeing ourselves in a new light: every one of us, a missionary;
every pastor, a mission director; every congregation, a mission center;
our bishop leading us as a missionary bishop

IMAGINE...saying, "We've never done it that way before...let's try!"

IMAGINE...dreaming new dreams, which are actually the same dreams
our grandparents in the faith dreamed when they
established God's mission in NW Ohio almost 200 years ago

IMAGINE...our congregations engaging in all the activities that demonstrate
signs of vitality in Christ:
devoting ourselves to the apostles' teaching,

participating in loving fellowship,
praying fervently, worshiping with joy and ecstatic praise,
sharing everything in common, caring always for the poor
IMAGINE...wonders and signs being done among us now, today
IMAGINE...that others think of us as being glad and generous
IMAGINE...having the good will of all the people
IMAGINE...every day the Lord adding to our number those who are being saved

IMAGINE...holding onto the very best of our traditions as Lutheran Christians,
while also following a trajectory of change, enabling us to share
the gospel of Jesus in new ways, in a new day

IMAGINE...our congregations reflecting the beautiful racial and cultural
diversity

of the neighborhoods we serve

IMAGINE...people coming to our church buildings because they are
hungry and lonely, and going away satisfied, feeling valued and loved

IMAGINE...us never again saying,

“We need new members in order to meet our budget.”

IMAGINE...us being a sign of hope in communities which are depressed,
economically and spiritually

IMAGINE...us no longer being called the “frozen chosen”, as we joyfully and
freely

tell stories of how God has delivered us and given us joy and hope
through

Christ Jesus

IMAGINE...us no longer judging each other according to our worship styles,
but rather appreciating those who make the sign of the cross
as well as those who raise their hands,
appreciating those who kneel in silent prayer
as well as those who shout “Amen!”

IMAGINE...radically recognizing each other as part of the body of Christ.

Imagine never saying, “I have no need of you!”

Imagine us regularly suffering with each other when we suffer,
and rejoicing together when we rejoice

IMAGINE...feeling deeply connected to fellow Christians in our community
and around the world, acting charitably to people of other faiths,
and acting peaceably with those who reject our faith

IMAGINE...us being filled with the Spirit of Jesus so powerfully

that when we serve at church, we go home more energized and hopeful
than we were when we came

IMAGINE...our youth present among us, coming to worship, providing
leadership

among us; imagine our young people being welcomed, loved, and
cherished

IMAGINE...our more traditional members feeling that they are still
honored and valued in the midst of disorientating change

IMAGINE...God giving us the gift of disorientation, that we might be shaken
from our

sloth and begin to see the marvelous new things that God is doing among
us

IMAGINE...us being grateful for all God has given us in the past,
and eagerly looking ahead,
trusting in the Good Shepherd's faithful and gracious leading

IMAGINE...us gathered together around the font and the table,
recognizing the face of Jesus in one another

IMAGINE...the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding,
keeping our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus, now and forever.

Amen.

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