

## VRSM IN ACTION!

More than a year ago, this congregation voted to engage in a new Rocky Mountain Synod ELCA initiative called Vital Right Shaped Ministry (VRSM). As part of that process, the VRSM Team drafted a series of six Core Values that reflects the essence of what Holy Love feels is its ministry. Those were then presented to the congregation and adopted. What does this mean going forward? It means that all ministry, both current and future, should be measured as to how it fits into and furthers the Core Values. In other words, does it help shape our ministry here in Aurora and the world in a way that is right and true to who we are and who we aspire to be.

Recently, we got to see this process in action. Two large trees on the west side of the church needed to be removed as they constituted a hazard to the building, its plumbing and possibly to its people. While this project may seem a bit prosaic, boring even, the process of accomplishing this task was inspiring, and involved the people of Holy Love and the surrounding community in ways that fulfilled all of the Core Values and showed the Holy Spirit to be active among us.

**Core Value 1) Connected into Community:** Love your neighbor as yourself (Jesus, Mark 12:31). If we don't have love, we have nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2). We love boldly, audaciously, and fearlessly. Our gifts, talents and love are nothing if not in service to our community.

- One of our Holy Love preschool students gave \$10 of their own money! Said the student: "My dad gave me this for Christmas, and I want it to help the church because I like it." The Preschool is one of our most important outreaches into the community.
- Rather than have the wood from the downed trees hauled off, volunteers cut and split the wood and offered to the community for a free will donation. From our firewood sales alone, we raised over \$1,000!

**Core Value 2) Faithfully Curious:** Our passion is not just to the Holy Word of God, but to an insatiable curiosity to explore and grow our faith, and how it manifests in the world in which we live.

- One family who heated their house with a wood burning stove stopped by. They had just run out of wood for heating purposes (and if you'll remember, it was chilly when the trees came down). The family was worried about how they were going to afford heating their house... until they happened to drive by. God at work!!!

**Core Value 3) Theologically Guided:** We value the historical Lutheran understanding of God, humanity, worship, and the ways in which God works within our ever-changing world.

- One of the tree branches was rotting from the inside out... and was hanging over the preschool's playground. Had we not removed it when we did, there is a strong potential it would have come crashing down over the preschool playground during our various severe wind events in late April. When we identified this project, we did not know for sure how close we might be to a terrible accident, but the Holy Spirit continued to whisper in our ears that this was something that needed to be done.

**Core Value 4) Intentional Discipleship:** Inspired by Jesus' life and ultimate sacrifice, we strive to live out our faith serving in leadership, engaging our community, and giving of ourselves (our time, our skills, our finances).

- The professional tree removal crew said they had never seen a work site (or congregation) do as much work independently as we had! Because we had a crew of 7+ help break down the tree, we were able to save significantly! And people had fun working together. Check out the videos on our website of the tree coming down, and the team using the wood slicer!
- To fund the project, we raised over \$10,000 in just four weeks!

**Core Value 5) Generational Stewardship:** As a congregational family, we care for each other across generational boundaries.

- This project was of substantial benefit not only to the church in general, but to the Holy Love Preschool specifically. Any falling limbs would probably have resulted in an interruption of classes. The preschool is us and all of the staff and students, whether members of Holy Love or not, are important members of our extended family. Caring for them is a wonderful God inspired privilege.

**Core Value 6) Cultivating Inclusive Christians:** Christ walked with everyone; we want to walk with everyone. Jesus' first followers came from all different ways of life and ideologies. We strive to reach those who could otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

- Another person who picked up firewood noticed we had a preschool-- he had been looking for a preschool for his kid to attend. Even though he drove by our church building every day, he had never realized we offered a preschool! Last we heard, he had contacted Mary Stephens, the Preschool Director about a visit and potential enrollment.

VRSM in action! Praise be to God.

Darryl Harvey