



## A Personal Mission Statement

*A column by Circle Pines Mayor Dave Bartholomay for the Quad Community Press Newspaper (3/29/2016)*

I recently attended a Leadership & Values Luncheon at Concordia College in Moorhead, where my son Kyle is a junior. The speaker talked about servant leadership and the importance of having a 'personal mission statement' that identifies your core values and beliefs and helps guide you to be your best. Steven Covey, a best-selling business author, referred to developing a mission statement as "connecting with your own unique purpose and the profound satisfaction that comes from fulfilling it."

We typically think more about mission statements as those belonging to business. One of my favorites is by the founder of 'Life is Good' clothing (Spreading the Power of Optimism: Life is not perfect. Life is not easy. Life is good.).

So if you were to consider your life so far, and work to identify your values and your purpose, what would be your personal mission statement? I've thought about that from my perspective as a mayor in the community, and I realized there is a strong connection between my work, my life, and my faith.

As you may know, I'm an active member of Our Saviors Lutheran Church in Circle Pines. As I work to grow in my faith, I've become interested in the writings of Martin Luther, a theology professor who, five hundred years ago, taught Christians that getting into heaven is not something you earn by doing good deeds, but instead is only received as a free gift of God's grace. In the 1500's, this idea turned the church world on its head, and numerous new branches of Christianity beyond Catholicism were formed.

Why is this so important? Because after a lot of thought and soul searching, I have decided that my personal mission statement is a quote from Martin Luther that was on the back of one of my son's summer mission trip t-shirts: "God doesn't need your good works, but your neighbor does."

This means I don't do good works around our community to earn my way into heaven, but rather to serve my neighbor who needs help. And it fits in with what Steven Covey was saying earlier about the 'profound satisfaction' that comes from fulfilling the mission statement. I can't believe the support and appreciation I've received in my role as mayor, as I try my best to live up to my personal mission statement.

That doesn't mean it's always easy as I stumble on my way through life. How often do I do good works for people or cultures I do not understand very well (for example, newly-arrived immigrants)? Or for people who think very differently from me on important issues? Sadly, it is easier for me to help those I know or for something that I can more easily relate to. We all need to stretch out of our comfort zones in order to serve and do good works all across our community, and to better appreciate the skills and gifts of people different than ourselves.

Consider developing a personal mission statement that helps connect your life to your community. There are neighbors in need of your talents and good works, and the satisfaction you get from helping others will make it well worth your effort.