

## PREFACE

The term, *Santa Clara Valley Lutheran Parish*, is a term that comes out of the struggle of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Santa Clara Valley Area Mission Strategy Development Team to define its parameters. For several months, the team wrestled with the concept of "parish." Is it a congregation? Is it the territory that surrounds a certain church building? Is it the community we serve? Or is it something else?

Informed by other documents that define the parish as "place," yet conscious of the fact that nearly all the present ELCA congregations in the county overlap each other (in some cases quite extensively) and, thus, aware that any classic use of the word "parish" would be virtually impossible in this vast megalopolis without impinging on a given congregation's "turf" or "territory," the team--in a burst of inspiration one day--hit upon the concept of considering the entire area as one "parish."

It was a freeing and almost exhilarating moment. No longer would we be bound by geographic constrictions. No longer would we be confined by any single congregation's sense of space. No longer would we be in a competing mode with one another. Rather, we could view this whole valley of "heart's delight," as it was once known, as our "place" of ministry.

And so the concept, "*Santa Clara Valley Lutheran Parish*," was born. It conveys a sense of the whole. It specifies the territory that we as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in this place serve. And it allows us to view our ministries, whatever and wherever they may be, as interconnected and interdependent.

Congregations would be centers in and through which ministry is carried out. Special ministries--like Lutheran Campus Ministry, Lutheran Social Services, Jail Ministries, Sunny View, and Turning Point--would, likewise, be centers in and through which ministry is carried out. And each constituent, in his or her daily life, would also be a *locus*, or a "place" in and through which ministry is carried out.

The "parish," though, is larger than one congregation. It is broader than each special ministry. And it is wider than one group of individuals. It is the whole. And we are each a part of it.

So while, on the one hand, "the whole world is our parish," as John Wesley is reported to have said, and while, on the other hand, there are specific places in this valley in and through which ministry is carried out by us, in the broad sense this valley, which in some circles is known as "*Silicon Valley*," is our parish, our "place" for doing ministry.

So may it be.