

Building God's People To Reach Our Neighbours

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While contemplating the content of this year's first Family News, I remembered a passage from God's Word in my personal devotions. *"Do not take me away, O my God, in the midst of my days; your years go on through all generations. In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."* (Psalm 102:24-27)

A man's life is fleeting, yet God is everlasting; humans are weak, but God is almighty; circumstances may change, but His grace, mercy and faithfulness will never alter. Before the Creator of heaven and earth, our God, I humbly bow down and worship, praising and giving thanks to Him. *"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:22-23) Brothers and sisters, let us give thanks to our Lord for year 2008 and entrust the coming year to God wholeheartedly.

Praise God for leading our church in the implementation of the Multi-Site Church Model since 2007. In the past two years, our theme has been: One Lord, One Church, One Mission. On the one hand, we emphasized the importance of being united in a large spiritual family, on the other, we strived to allocate resources as a

good steward to find a new site so as to share the gospel with others.

Looking back to the past two years, we could do nothing but give thanks, because, *"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain."* (Psalm 127:1) Although there can never be a perfect church model, we have surely seen God's beautiful plan in guiding our ministry through the multi-site church model. Also, through MSCM, we endeavor to strengthen and nurture the various sites, widen the spread of the Gospel and missionary work, follow up the new believers and promote discipleship training more systematically. We want to promote deeper spiritual education of leaders, so that brothers and sisters can utilize their gifts and serve in various positions to build up the church and to glorify our Heavenly Father.

The MSCM helps to augment a systematic and clear administrative structure, which facilitates communication and future development of various ministries. Therefore, MSCM does not only effect a structural renewal to the church's administration, more importantly, it has brought about a renewal in our dedication to the Great Commission: spreading the Gospel, building disciples, expanding God's kingdom to glorify our Lord. It is delightful to witness the increase in the number of non-believers being saved by means of the Alpha courses, Women's Café, the Evergreen ministry, the

Evangelism Explosion, and many other outreach programs and events. We give thanks because new converts are being nurtured, and disciples are being equipped by the Leadership Training Institute. The North Burnaby site was founded, and the number of ministry workers and short-term ministry workers has increased, and more and more lay Christians are receiving theological training. These are examples of God's grace and blessings upon the church - May His Name be exalted in the church.

The church theme of 2009 is "Building God's People To Reach Our Neighbours". The Board of Elders has decided this theme because they want to emphasize that the main objective is building **people**: to care for the **unbelievers**, nurture the **new believers**, train **disciples** and develop **spiritual leaders**. Building God's people is our church's core value; more significantly, it is Jesus' heart desire.

Matthew 9:36 says, *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."* Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and hoping people will know about God. At the same time, *He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach"* (Mark 3:14). That is exactly what the Bible tells us: Jesus Christ's heart desire is to **build God's people**.

Before His ascension, Jesus reiterated this core value. In Matthew 28:19-20, He said, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* The essence of the Great Commission is: "make disciples of all nations." Jesus delivered this important message using an imperative mood; since it is the Lord's command, there is no choice but to listen and comply.

God ordered His twelve disciples to make disciples of all nations. There, He emphasized an essential principle: only a disciple can train another to become a disciple of Christ. This is what we should adhere to in fulfilling the Great Commission today. If we are not aware of our identity as a disciple, or if we are unwilling to be a disciple, we cannot lead others to become a disciple of Christ.

What does it mean to be a disciple then? A disciple is basically a student or a follower. **To be a disciple requires the following qualities:**

1. **Respond to God's calling.**
(Matthew 4:19-20)
2. **Follow His example.**
(Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:5)
3. **Learn to serve through sacrifice.**
(Matthew 16:24)
4. **Submit to God's commission.**
(Luke 9:1-2)

It is our hope that the church's theme for 2009 will lead us towards learning from God's example, building disciples, pursuing spiritual maturity, so as to reach our neighbors and influence our community with our godly love. I believe that a theme that focuses on strengthening our spiritual life is pleasing to the Lord.

Willow Creek Community Church, with a congregation of over 20,000, is perhaps the most influential church in America. The self-evaluation report called "REVEAL" is a wake up call to many churches of today.
(<http://revealnow.com/story.asp?storyid=49>)
At the 2007 Leadership Summit, Rev. Bill Hybels explained that at Willow Creek they had conducted a survey within their church to see whether all the resources they were allocating were really achieving their mission of "turning irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ" and helping people to grow spiritually. One of the questions they asked was "how helpful was the church in the various stages of your life. They defined these stages as: "pre-Christian/seeker"; "new Christian"; "growing Christian"; and "fully devoted followers of Christ".

The data showed some interesting findings. While some data were wonderfully affirming and showed that for seekers and new believers they were doing well in reaching them and helping them in their stage of life. However for the stage of life for fully devoted followers of Christ, the response from respondents was not what they had expected. The score was a lot lower and respondents said they wanted more meat, they wanted to be challenged more.

Hybels said that what they found out was that they should have started telling people when they were at the stage of being a "new Christian" and "growing Christian" that they need to take the responsibility to become "self feeders". He said, "we should have gotten people; taught them how to read the Bible between services; how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own, because what's happening to these people is: the older they get, the more they are

expecting the church to feed them, when, and in fact, the more mature a Christian becomes, a Christian should become more of a self-feeder...."

If a Christian has established the habit of staying close to God, reading the Bible between services, and is enthusiastic in interceding for others and spreading the gospel, his or her spiritual life would surely be strongly fortified.

Today, the church really needs to nurture many more spiritually equipped disciples who are ready for "solid food" (Hebrew 5:14), and are willing to follow Christ's example; "...and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). In addition, Jesus also wants us to train others to mature in Christ, for He commands us to *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."* Likewise, Paul urged Timothy to *"...entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."* (2 Tim 2:2) To conclude, bringing others to Christ has the purpose of teaching and training them in Christ, so that they can in turn teach others.

We give thanks to God for the new theme of the coming year. Let us aspire with one heart to be Christ's devoted disciples, and to make disciples of all nations. Our resolution for the New Year is to look up to our loving Father - Jesus Christ, the Head of the church. May God lead us to face the challenges of 2009, grant us a clear vision and the unity to build a healthy balanced-growing multi-site church, with the sole purpose of glorifying Him.

The vision statement of VCAC is to be a worshipping, growing, and loving community that reflects the beauty of Jesus Christ to transform our community and the world.