

The Vision of the Church



By Pastor Ivan Leung

Recently, I recall the following prayer I said to God about six and a half years ago:

Dear God,

Faced with the future ministry,

I pray for guidance in leading the direction of Your church.

In this crooked and depraved generation,

May You grant us a clear vision directly from You;

In a world proclaiming individualism,

May You keep us in unity in Christ Jesus;

In a world with declining and twisted moral standards,

May You empower us to live a holy life;

In a world with poor and loose human relationships,

May You encourage us to love and accept one another;

In the midst of heresies and false teaching,

May You help us to stay firm on the Biblical Truth;

In a world that focuses on pragmatism,

May You sustain our care for lost souls;

In a world full of busy working days,

May You always remind us of our first love for you;

This is my sincere prayer.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

This very prayer has become a vision in my ministry at VCAC. The Bible sums it up well, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18). But, what is "vision"? A vision is a clear view given by God of what will happen in the preferable future. If there were no vision, there would be no commission, and without commission, there is no commitment. Praise the Lord, God had given a new vision to our church at the end of 2002: "Our vision is to be a worshipping, growing, and loving community that reflects the beauty of Jesus Christ to transform our community and the world."

When I started to revisit the vision of our church recently, a question came to mind: What exactly do we anticipate our church will be like in the future in light of the multi-site development at VCAC? As I pondered in quiet meditation, seven aspects came to the forefront. I believe that it is a blessing if God

impresses upon all of us to seek with one heart to pursue the same vision. What are we striving for?

1. A Biblical Church

"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 1:20).

In the midst of heresies and false teaching, we need to be fortified with the Biblical Truth. The importance of the Bible should never be questioned; neither should we ever take the Bible light-heartedly, for, "... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31), and the Bible will help us grow spiritually. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). The Bible helps us to know God more (Hosea 6:3); it can steer us towards the right direction, because, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). In this fleeting world, we need to trust in the authority and unchanging nature of the Bible, because it is the source of Truth, and the benchmark of our daily living. Therefore, we should study the Bible in a serious manner. When faced with the challenges of the secular world, we need to return to the illumination of the Scripture.

2. A Praying Church

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with

Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

The Antioch Church is a praying church. As they were fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them; they then sent Barnabas and Saul off. Likewise, today we too can say, 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6). All ministries of the church start with prayer; let us pray incessantly and rely on the Lord to accomplish the mission He committed to us.

3. A Worshipping Church

"Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth" (Psalm 96:7-9).

Worship is the core of our faith. Dr. A. W. Tozer, the faithful servant of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, once pointed out that the purpose of redemption is to restore the right relationship between God and man, and that the right relationship is for man to worship Him. Therefore, in our life, we need to learn to worship. Worship is not only the most important part of our current earthly life, but also the model of our future eternal life. "No

longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve (worship) him" (Revelation 22:3).

The Bible has consistently emphasized the relationship between God and man, and how this close relationship could be established through worship. God wants His people to "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:4) because He deserves all the honor and glory. May we continue to strive to be a true worshipper and an authentic worshipping community.

4. A Loving Church

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

When Jesus gave the disciples this commandment, He was literally the role model. He demonstrated humility by washing the feet of His disciples. Then He commanded them, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (John 13:14-15)

Today, we are aspiring to be a loving community, which makes public our relationship with the Lord, for "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made

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complete in us” (I John 4:12). Also, “...whoever loves God must also love his brother” (I John 4:21), and, “we love because He first loved us” (I John 4:19).

May God bless us with the passion to practice loving one another. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

5. A Growing Church

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity” (Hebrews 6:1).

“Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52), and He urged us to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48), and that it is God’s expectation for us to mature, “but solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.” (Hebrews 5:14-6:1).

Being “Grown in stature” and “perfect” are the same word in the original Scripture, meaning being mature. Hebrews’ author encourages believers to depart from the infant stage to aim for maturity. The secret is to aspire for advancement in the Word of God, moving from drinking milk to taking solid food, from self-centredness to being submissive to God’s will; and from being apprentices to finally becoming masters. Being diligent in reading the Bible, and responding and applying what we have learnt from the sermons are among the

things we can do to prepare for spiritual adulthood and maturity. We need to grow continually in spiritual knowledge, character building and ministry skills. Growth is a personal responsibility of every believer, because individual growth is directly tied to the spiritual growth of the whole church.

6. A Serving Church

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).

Whenever Jesus taught His disciples about spiritual leadership, He always demonstrated the Truth of being a **Servant-Leader** by setting personal examples. The secular world emphasizes utilizing power and the “leader-first” mentality to climb up the political ladder. In God’s Kingdom, a leader needs to learn first to be a humble servant. Jesus personified humility by washing His disciples’ feet, willingly taking up the duty of a slave of His time.

Today, God cares more about who we are than what we do. We have numerous opportunities to serve others, so let us hope that we will adopt the humble attitude of a servant, just like our Saviour Jesus, so that we can truly become a servant-leader.

7. A Missional Church

“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” (Matthew 28:19).

The core message of Jesus’ great commission to us is not only to evangelize, but also to spread His teaching, from one to the next, helping each other to become a mature follower, thus fulfilling the aim of “making disciples of all nations”.

In moments like this, the church needs a group of committed spiritual leaders, who are willing to faithfully train others to be future spiritual leaders. The biggest need of the church is discipleship training of its believers, in supporting them to stand firm in faith after conversion, and to be eventually grown up to the stature of Christ’s disciples. Through individual discipleship training, the church can reap the benefit of securing a group of mature disciples who are fervent in spreading the gospel and training others to be committed disciples like themselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, God had given us a clear vision, the purpose is not only to build up the church itself, but most importantly, is to transform our community and the world. Let us continue to pray with a united heart. We ask God to bless our church to become a channel of blessing to many people. His name will be glorified in return.

Meet the Staff

We are happy to welcome the newest member to our pastoral staff who has joined us recently. Here's an opportunity for you to get to know her a little better:



Pastor Becky Lim

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Fraser Lands Children's Pastor

Growing up in a Christian family has always had an impact in Pastor Becky's life. She was born in Medicine Hat, AB and raised in Vancouver, BC. Her father and brother are also pastors, and her mother helps serve alongside - she feels blessed to be born and raised in a family serving in ministry! She has moved around and lived in various countries which have helped her understand the different cultures. She graduated from Alliance University College in Calgary, AB with a Bachelor's of Ministry degree concentrating in Children's Ministry. She loves to teach children as well as interact and build relationships with them. She wants to help children grow and experience Christ and live out the Truth in their lives. Her passion is to help children of the church draw closer to God, but also to reach out to the community and the lost. Pastor Becky dreams that someday, if God-willing, she could serve in the missions field overseas. In her spare time, Pastor Becky enjoys reading, learning languages, playing volleyball, travelling, and hanging out with her friends.

Ministry Updates

Site to Site @ VCAC

What's Happening at North Burnaby

In the past few months the Lord has been undoubtedly gracious to the North Burnaby (NB) site. The Lord provided the availability of the gymnasium for Sunday services, Sunday services started in September, cell group leaders trained in January, two cell groups launched in February, various congregation members care and serve each other in unity, and the NB site has built an excellent relationship with the elementary school. These are merely part of the more obvious blessings. The Lord is indeed good and gracious.

On the other hand, the NB site has her challenges and urgent needs. The lack of human resources and space limitations for different meetings are the primary challenges. For the past few months, a few families decided to leave because of the language barrier, and some returned to their original congregations. The congregation of the NB site is now stabilized at a size of twenty. This pool of congregation resources is insufficient to organize all of the essential ministries, including youth ministry. There is an urgent need to have brothers and sisters to commit in the children's

and youth ministry. Chinese families in North Burnaby are very concerned about the well being of their children. It would be a good attraction for non-believers to come if the church had strong children's and youth ministries. Not having one will definitely hamper the growth of the NB site. In terms of the shortage of space, for instance, a women's outreach ministry cannot be started immediately due to the fact that there is no space available.

The NB site urgently needs committed brothers and sisters to join the ministry so that we could share the

gospel with some thirty thousand Chinese non-Christians in North Burnaby. To cater to the language needs of the burdened brothers and sisters who are not fluent in Mandarin we will start having Cantonese interpretation for Sunday sermons in June. We pray that the Lord will bring you to our midst in order to serve Him together and witness His mighty power and grace together. Please remember us in your prayer without ceasing.

Blessings,
Pastor Raphael Chow