


OUR 2020 VISION



“The Lord’s faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Psalm 100:5 

Joyous sounds of praise and worship are heard rising this day from the large group gathered under the old oak tree at St. Paul’s Christian Church. With the psalmist of old, they sing, “The Lord’s faithfulness continues through all generations.” Beneath this majestic tree church members, friends, and the community at large have come together to celebrate another year of ministry in the life of St. Paul’s. The extended branches of the oak are like the extended arms of those gathered, providing comfort and bringing unity. Smiles are plentiful as groups representing all ages, cultures, and congregations join together providing a glimpse of variety and fullness of the family of God.

This gathering and the ministries being celebrated are the result of a journey first begun in 1959 and then refocused 11 years ago in 2009 as a *spiritual strategic journey*, when St. Paul’s congregation realized that it could accomplish *BIG things* when it dared to claim the God-sized vision to which it had been called. Just as St. Paul’s was celebrating the first 50 years of ministry, congregational leaders began planning for the next 50 years. They began the journey by entering into a season of prayer during which more than 60 people joined in prayer triplets, meeting weekly to study and pray together in order to discern the path God was leading them on. Participants began asking what the church would look like in 2020 if it shaped its vision, relationships, programs, and management style around God’s particular calling for the congregation.

The answers began to emerge as God’s Spirit of creativity and enthusiasm started moving in small prayer groups and in small committee meetings. People began to see that God was affirming the unique gifts and historic calling of the congregation. They knew that God had called St. Paul’s to open itself up to being changed by other cultures and other congregations. Once only the dream of a few, St Paul’s could no longer imagine itself without the vitality and courageous faith of its Montagnard members. Similarly, as the congregation opened its campus up to other worshipping communities, St. Paul’s realized that it was tied to the world in new ways through the joined ministries of the New Life International Christian Church and the India Christian Community Fellowship. Although it found itself opening in new ways to other cultures and congregations, St. Paul’s did not

lose its core gift of living as “family” through a God-sized vision of what family really looks like joined in mission.

At the end of this season of prayer and discernment, it became clear that the story to which St. Paul’s was being called was both multi-generational and multi-congregational, with a clearly multi-cultural flavor. The challenge was how to focus efforts toward reaching two or three generations, while living together as a family of all generations with a variety of cultural backgrounds and religious traditions. God’s Spirit of knowledge started teaching the congregation about the community surrounding the church and the changes in the city. God helped the congregation to understand that individual generations are shaped more by the events and keystones of their age than any other single factor. The vision for 2020 began to develop as Builders, Boomers, Busters, Generation Xers and Millenials gained an understanding that, though they may respond to God’s call differently, they share a common calling to love God and one another.

As the vision emerged, it became clear that to keep this vision at its core, relationships with God and each other, programs, and the institutional life had to be formed to support that vision. In other words, the congregation began to recognize that it couldn’t do things just because “its always been done that way,” but it had to shape everything it did around the mission that God was calling it to. The vision would include a growing utilization of its website and digital technology to build community by reaching the homebound, the geographically distant, and those outside the congregation. Technology would also help minimize meeting time and maximize mission time. Another core component was a commitment to being good stewards of all of God’s gifts, maximizing efficient use of its land and buildings, and its people.

After writing the story, they began taking steps to live into this vision, by ensuring that its relationships, its programs and its structures all worked together to embody the vision. First, they hired a new Associate Minister to facilitate reaching generations that were falling away from church. Then, they brought together leaders of the three congregations on the St. Paul’s campus to dream together and begin working together amidst the various cultures to reach multiple generations of the “churched” and the “un-churched” and to lead them in growing relationship with Jesus Christ and with each other.

With this new vision, many changes began to take place in the congregation’s relationship to God and one another, in its programs, and in its organizational life. As it grew in its understanding of new ways to be in relationship with God and each other, St. Paul’s and its partners soon implemented three worship services to target different generations and needs: a contemporary service, a casual service, and a traditional service. Music styles and offerings were supplemented to target Busters, Generation Xers and Millenials. A satellite ministry provided Internet accessed worship services to the homebound and those who live great distances from the church. The “Take the Table,” ministry serves many generations by providing an opportunity for the able-bodied and the homebound to be one as the body of Christ as they share the Lord’s feast.

God's 2020 vision for St. Paul's Christian Church also inspired the development of numerous programs such as, the Kinder-Creation School; Youth Programs; English-Language-Learner Programs; Divorce-Care; Grief-Share; "Bridging the Gap between the Jewish and Christian Faith;" and a Senior Day Care Center. The 2020 Vision continued to support the historic work of the congregation at the State Fair, but through the 2020 lens the focus became more inter-generational and the cuisine developed an international flair.

The institutional life of the church ("Buildings, Boards and Bucks") also changed to support the 2020 vision. The International Disciples Center was completed to provide space for the growing vision. The center is energy self-sufficient and meets many of the needs of aging Builders, Boomers, Busters, as well as Generation Xers, and Millennials. The Center also provides a central meeting place for all of the partner congregations to worship and fellowship together. With encouragement from the 2020 Vision, old buildings have been made new. The Brown and Law buildings received a second story and the two buildings were attached to each other to provide additional administrative offices and a large group meeting room. The West building gained a second story to provide space for an expanding pre-school program. Other space was renovated to provide a new music room and another worship space. The Fellowship Hall gained an atrium enclosure surrounding the full-time baptistry and fountain, that leads to the Sanctuary, so that each time one enters the sanctuary, one passes the water and is reminded of one's baptism and of the waters of freedom through which God led the people to the Promised Land.

Look at St. Paul's church website and you'll see a full calendar with Bible study groups, adult care groups, children's ministries, and more. How can a church this busy find time to build relationships between diverse ages, cultures and interests? You'll find the answer in fewer meetings and more ministries. Logistical issues are addressed via email and through the internal website. Time together is spent in worship, fellowship and service, including regular Sunday school assemblies for all ages, combined worship, and quarterly all-community fellowship gatherings and work mission trips. These times bring together every group from St. Paul's Christian Church, showing the strong sense of community, family, and faith shared by all ages.

Our pastors say that we are a church seeking to live into our "Kingdom Potential." We live as if God's Reign has actually begun—because, in Jesus Christ, it has. You can see the Kingdom, God's Reign, in the people here—children, youth, young adults, middle age, and old – from multiple generations and cultures. As we stand at this point in the journey in the year 2020, we recognize and honor the steps first taken in 1959, and the many steps taken since that day to get us to a vision for this day and beyond. As a result, St. Paul's Christian Church continues to play a leading role in the community reaching people for Jesus Christ. Although not an easy journey into God's future, it has been, and

will continue to be a journey where we are led because God's "faithfulness continues through ALL generations."

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