

VISION PLAN 2023



WITHAMSVILLE
Church of Christ

Letter from Your Elders

Brothers and Sisters,

Almost a decade ago, we adopted the vision of "Living like Jesus by loving and serving all." This shifted our focus more externally on how we can lead others to Christ. In 2019, we decided to bring more attention to who we are as His body and how we would decide future efforts by creating our Vision Plan. This plan extended our Vision statement to also include a set of Core Values and Vision Initiatives. Our Core Values, based on His word, serve as a guide to who we are and who we want to become. They serve as the decision-making framework on the direction we would take as His church. The Vision Initiatives were based upon those Core Values and are what we thought were the most important areas for us to focus on as a church.

Since that time, the Lord has greatly blessed our body, including allowing us to accomplish the vast majority of the initiatives we had established (see page 10). When you consider the challenges our church, community and nation dealt with in 2020 and beyond, this is a truly amazing accomplishment that could only have been done through His blessings and guidance.

Since we have achieved many of our goals, the leadership felt it was time to revisit the Vision Plan. The following updates are the result of that review. Our Vision and Core Values remain unchanged; however, we worked this year to connect everything we do to our Core Values. The Vision Initiatives have been updated based upon prayerful study of where we feel the Lord is currently leading us. They are designed to guide us in personal development and focus us on doing His will to bring others to Him.

As we implement this refreshed plan, we need your help and involvement. Please be in prayer about areas you would like to be involved in as well as in your personal development.

As your shepherds, we always pray for you and our family here at Withamsville. We also pray for the families in our community, our country, and the world that all may be saved. We pray for His guidance and wisdom as we continue our journey to live like Jesus by loving and serving all.

Your Elders

Vision, Values, and Initiatives

Vision

Living like Jesus by loving and serving all.

Values

- We pursue God with passion
- We grow every day through the power of the Holy Spirit
- We unite as a family in Christ
- We love and serve to bring glory to Christ
- We invite others to the blessed life of salvation in Christ

Initiatives

- Deepen our spiritual relationships
- Reach the lost
- Promote a culture of hospitality
- Establish our next generation of faithful Christians
- Build intimate and lasting marriages

Our Values Explained

We pursue God with passion.

- We seek and pursue a deeper connection with God.
- Worship is a daily practice.
- We make our communal worship impactful to our church and to our community.
- We are guided by the Holy Spirit as we seek freshness in our worship of God.

We grow every day through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- We are devoted to the word of God, learning through Bible studies, small groups and personal devotionals.
- We submit our hearts, minds and souls to the transformative power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- We meet people where they are to help and challenge each other to become more like Christ.
- Spiritual growth permeates all areas of our lives including relationships, work, entertainment and everything we do.

We unite as a family in Christ.

- We consider others more important than ourselves as we follow the example of Jesus.
- Our lives are deeply bonded with each other as we together face all of life's joys and challenges.
- We embrace all people from all backgrounds as we seek unity based on Christ and His Gospel rather than our traditions.

We love and serve others to bring glory to Christ.

- Our service is focused not only on physical needs, but also on the emotional and spiritual needs of our church and community.

We seek opportunities to serve our members, our communities and individuals regardless of status.

- We stand with those who have suffered injustices (Isaiah 58).
- Service is viewed by all members as a privilege of being in Christ.

We invite others to the blessed life of salvation in Christ.

- We care deeply about the condition of the lost around us and throughout the world.
- We are eager and prepared to share the hope of Jesus that lies within us.
- We use our homes, our relationships at work and play and every opportunity to share the love of Christ with others.

Initiatives Explained

Deepen Our Spiritual Relationships

We will deepen our personal relationships with God, letting Him transform us ever closer into His image. We will do this in several ways: by an increased devotion to Biblical teachings, with a greater practice of prayer and other spiritual disciplines, and with a recognition that “iron sharpens iron.” We will build deeper spiritual relationships with each other to encourage and challenge us on our daily walk. We will use class offerings, specialized small groups, and spiritual retreats to equip the church to commune with God and walk with Jesus daily through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Our core values will become a regular part of our conversations, classes, and sermons.
- We will offer in-depth Bible studies in various settings that focus on deepening our relationship with, and understanding of, God and encouraging us to be transformed into His image.
- We will provide expanded opportunities for our members to form and join small groups where spiritual connections can be formed. These groups will be a way to develop deeper relationships and to hold each other accountable in love as we strive to imitate Jesus.
- We will develop and/or sponsor a spiritual retreat(s) focused on practicing spiritual disciplines and relationship building. These will be repeated on a regular basis.
- We will develop some objective tools to help us evaluate whether we are growing in our spiritual disciplines.

Measuring Results

- Are our core values a part of our everyday conversation? Can our members articulate our core values?
- Did we offer in-depth Bible studies that focused on transforming our lives?
- Did we expand small group opportunities? Did those involved in these small groups form deeper spiritual connections?
- Did we as individuals and as a church deepen our relationship with God?

This initiative strongly supports these Core Values

- We pursue God with passion.
- We grow every day through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We unite as a family in Christ.

Reach the Lost

We will acknowledge the impact Jesus has on our lives by making it a priority to share the good news of the gospel with our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family. Our everyday conversations will be seasoned with words of faith and of hope in Jesus' saving power that comes from our heart as we speak to those around us. We will "go into all the world" and our community to reach the lost.

- We will evaluate our outreach ministries by ensuring we are meeting new people and telling them about Jesus. This may lead our church family to transition to new ministries and, in some cases, choose not to continue others.
- We will ask each member to set and achieve personal goals for sharing Jesus with the people God places in their personal life.
- We will prayerfully consider how to further train, equip, and encourage our church family to spread the gospel. Our goal is simple – share Jesus with the lost.

Measuring the Results

- Has our church, our various ministries, and our small groups brought new souls into the kingdom?
- Have you pursued self-reflection on your personal efforts to reach the lost? Can you name people with whom you have shared the gospel?
- Have we offered encouragement and skill development to help you share Jesus Christ with the lost?

This initiative strongly supports these Core Values

- We invite others to the blessed life of salvation in Christ.

Promote a Culture of Hospitality

We will seek to emulate Jesus by sharing dinner, fellowship, and Christian conversation with strangers from within our church body and our community who need the gospel. Our church will be known as a body that not only greets visitors warmly at church, but also makes room for newcomers in the activities of daily life.

- Our church leadership will increasingly model the practice of Christian hospitality (1 Peter 4:9).
- We will all devote time to regularly open our homes and lives to others to “do life together.” The result will be deeper relationships with others so that they become a part of our spiritual family.
- We will start more small groups and be intentional with existing groups to share the gospel and embrace newcomers. These will include common interest groups, Bible study groups, support groups, and others.

Measuring Results

- Were there regular testimonies by leaders and others who are practicing hospitality?
- Can you name new people in your life because of your hospitality?
- Have our diverse small group efforts helped integrate newcomers and non-Christians?

This initiative strongly supports these Core Values

- We love and serve to bring glory to Christ.
- We invite others to the blessed life of salvation in Christ.
- We unite as a family in Christ.

Establish Our Next Generation of Faithful Christians

We want our children to be lifelong followers of Jesus. We will continue our efforts to teach our children to accept Jesus into their lives and establish a deep and personal relationship with God. We will also continue to offer classes, camps, special events, resources, and retreats.

But we will also extend our focus to that of helping our young to transition into faithful adults.

- We will provide our parents with resources to help prepare their children to have a solid foundation of faith. This will include educational resources to promote spiritual conversations to grow their faith throughout early childhood and adolescence.
- We will encourage cross generational integration to share knowledge, joy, and wisdom as we experience life together.
- We will seek to enhance and grow our young adult community (i.e., college and singles) within the church by creating an environment for Christian growth. We will organize events that are fun, welcoming, and enriching. Through these activities, we strive to connect young adults in similar life stages with the goal of building their faith and relationship with God.

Measuring Results

- Did we provide resources to parents? Were they effective in helping the parents have faith conversations with their children?
- Are our children and young adults being actively influenced in their faith by our older members? Conversely, are our older members being influenced in their faith by our young?
- Are we providing opportunities and support to create a vibrant young adult community? Is this community active and growing?

This initiative strongly supports these Core Values:

- We unite as a family in Christ.
- We grow every day through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We pursue God with passion.

Build Intimate and Lasting Marriages

Satan is at war on one of the most central and holiest of God's institutions – marriage. We will counteract this by reinvigorating our effort to offer practical solutions to the crisis of failing marriages in the church and in the community. We will provide transformational resources for healing and enrichment based upon God's plan for intimate and lasting marriages (Gen. 2:24).

- We will offer education and support opportunities for married couples to combat Satan's war against the family, including topics on marriage, health, financial stewardship, and parenting support.
- We will also offer marriage seminars and retreats to encourage focus on the marriage relationship.
- We will enhance our capacity to minister to those marriages that are under stress and/or in crisis.

Measuring Results

- Did we offer educational and support opportunities? Were they effective?
- Did we offer marriage seminars and retreats? Were they effective?
- Did we enhance our capacity to minister to marriages under stress?

This initiative strongly supports these Core Values

- We unite as a family in Christ.

2019 Vision Plan Follow Up

After the rollout of our 2019 Vision Plan, a number of actions were initiated, redirected, or further emphasized to advance the four initiatives that were developed. Below are *some* of the things that were accomplished in each of those four areas and also an accomplishment related to our core values. It should be noted that these are only a sampling of the many things that were done.

Training to Follow Jesus

- An adult education team was established, and they identified a set of core classes to strengthen the congregation's foundation of faith.
- They developed and implemented a three-year curriculum covering many of those core classes and additional topics.
- Practical classes to help people grow as disciples of Jesus were included in this curriculum.

Serving Our Neighbors as Missionaries

- We have hosted numerous outreach activities serving our community and sharing our faith with others: Community Picnic, working with Inter-parish Ministries, Blue Bus of Hope, and others.
- We have emphasized outreach to non-members in most of our activities – KidFest, Bible Day Camp, Mini School, and others.
- We have emphasized sharing our faith from the pulpit in the "Learning to Fish" and "Hospitality Incarnated" sermon series.
- We held classes/workshops focused on training and developing our abilities to share our faith with others. These included the Contagious Christian class (three sessions), Finding Your Gift class, and a Personal Spiritual Growth class.
- We established a Visitor Follow-Up Team to reach out to every visitor. This team has now been in operation for over one year.
- We began to support the Great Cities mission to Boa Vista, Brazil.

Winning Our Children to Christ

- In October 2020, we hired Christian Thompson as our Youth Minister. We have been tremendously blessed by Christian, Angela, and their three children. Our youth ministry has been reinvigorated in terms of energy and activity. Our teens have been getting a steady diet of deep spiritual training, fun activities, and personal growth.
- We established and staffed the children's ministry role. Cindy Summers initially assumed this role part time while also performing administrative duties. Michelle Inghland later assumed this role. A new children's curriculum was adopted and has been enthusiastically received by both the children and parents. We have had numerous events engaging our children in fun, faith-building activities. We have seen greater involvement of parents in our activities and classes.
- Both of these ministries have seen significant spiritual and numerical growth.

Building Intimate and Lasting Marriages

- We have developed and presented classes on the topics of both marriage and parenting. These classes have been well received by those attending.
- We held a marriage retreat for couples. This was attended by both married and unmarried couples.

As mentioned above, there were many other activities and accomplishments in each of these areas over the past few years. Much remains to be done. However, given the trying times over the past few years, God has richly blessed us in our efforts to minister to our members, to reach our community, and to deepen our faith in Him.

Notes

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