

NEXT STEPS AT NORTHWEST

(From Dave Smith)

MISSION, VALUES AND VISION

- **MISSION**

Introduction: Why cast and re-cast Mission, Vision, Values?

The mission of every church is the Great Commission. All churches are to make disciples.

However, every church is made up of people with unique gifts and passions. As well, each church finds itself in a unique cultural setting that changes with time.

So, how church “A” will go about fulfilling the Great Commission will differ from how church “B” does it. And, how church “A” will go about fulfilling the Great Commission will change over time.

Here at Northwest, we last went through a consideration of our mission, our values, and our vision around 2010-11.

Then, nearly two years ago, the Elders took note of the fact that our church was in a very different season than we were back in 2011.

Many new people had become a part of our church; some who had been a part of our church have gone. There has been well over a 50% turnover of the people who make up Northwest over the last six years.

Some long-standing ministries have changed or are no longer in place. Some exciting new ministries have sprung up - ESL, Encuentro, and this summer's Family Growth Gatherings, to name just three.

Given these changes, we realized that it was time, again, to consider our mission, values, and vision.

The Elders have spent a lot of time discussing these things and praying about all of this. And what I'm presenting here are some things old and familiar and some things new and re-freshed.

1. Mission Statement

For many years our church has championed a certain Mission Statement. And the thoughts contained in that statement still move us deeply.

But the Elders have arrived at a new way to state our Mission and it comes directly from the Great Commission.

We want to be able to take someone from where they are, spiritually speaking, to a great “next” with Jesus. We want to equip those who come to us to be fully-formed disciples of Jesus. And, we wanted the statement of this mission to reflect a passion for making disciples.

With those thoughts in mind, this is Northwest's new statement of mission:

We help you take next steps ...so that you can help others take next steps with Jesus...

To highlight some important elements of this Mission Statement:

****It affirms that people move toward maturity and ministry via a process.*

There are lots of verses in the Bible that speak of growing as a Christian in terms of taking a walk.

For instance, Paul wrote, ***[Colossians 4:6] As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.***

Our Mission Statement imagines Christian growth as a walk made up of thousands of “next steps” of faith, obedience, love, and service, taken over a lifetime.

****The statement affirms that personal growth is not the whole picture; personal growth + ministry is the whole picture.*

We want everyone who is a part of Northwest to personally take “next steps”! But it is not **Mission: Accomplished** when you take “next steps”. It is only when you - who are taking “next steps” - help someone else take “next steps” that the Mission moves forward.

****The statement affirms universal application*

Everyone can pursue “next steps” with Jesus. Nobody has reached perfect spirituality. We can all grow.

AND, no matter who you are, you know someone who doesn’t know as much about following Jesus as you do. You can help that person take spiritual “next steps”.

****The statement is challenging and clear, but it is not intimidating.*

There are no biblical terms or theological jargon in the statement. Anyone can understand it. It is accessible. It is our way of stating The Great Commission in street clothes.

It may be that I resonate with this statement so fully because my own life has been - and continues to be - a next-step story.

I have been following Jesus for a long time now.

My life with Him has sometimes looked like an epic quest and sometimes like a walk in the dark. I’ve taken forward steps and more than my share of backward steps.

Jesus has led me out of some very bad habits and into some healthy disciplines.

For instance, when I was a teenager, He helped me step away from very unedifying speech patterns. He is currently helping me step away from more serious sins like selfishness, an independent spirit, and pride.

Step by step. That’s been God’s curriculum with me. I think it’s standard curriculum for disciples.

Our church’s Mission Statement shouts the hopeful message that Jesus wants us to take next steps with Him and that He wants us to help others take next steps with Him.

This Mission Statement will be on our church website, in weekly programs, on our Facebook page, and, yes, you might even hear me say something about “next steps” in sermons from time to time.

As we move forward to fulfill this mission, we’ll be focusing on four key activities.

2. Mission Strategy

****Make Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20*

First, we will make disciples. And, again, we are defining disciple-making as helping someone take a “spiritual next step.” (“a next step with Jesus”).

Everyone you know or can think of *can* take a spiritual next step.

Every time you help someone who is far from God learn about Jesus, you’re fulfilling the Great Commission’s command to “make disciples.” And every step toward maturity someone takes *after* coming to faith is a “next step” into discipleship.

We want our church to be prepared to help people who are at very different places with God take “next steps.”

In fact, the POINT of all we do at Northwest is to point each other to our *next* “next step” with Jesus.

ABF's and Care Groups, Interface and women's studies, men's studies and men's connecting events;
 children's Sunday School classes and Family Growth Gatherings;
 sermons and music and testimonies in worship services;
 everything that happens in youth ministry and everything Encuentro does;

It is all done to help people take "next steps" with Jesus.

And by "next steps" we're not thinking of something vague and nebulous. Next steps are **concrete** things like:

- pursuing connection with fellow Christ-followers;
- rebuilding a badly damaged marriage;
- repairing fractured relationships with kids or with friends;
- learning to pray - and actually praying;
- being done with a long-standing addiction to alcohol, drugs, or porn;
- actively serving at church, or serving a neighbor;

Helping someone else take a next step might look like coming alongside a friend who needs to:

- rebuild a badly damaged marriage;
- learn to pray;
- be done with an addiction to alcohol, drugs, or porn;
- actively serve;

We intend to be all about the Great Commission and spiritual next steps. So, two questions should be always be before each of us:

- What's my next step with Jesus?
- Who can I help take a next step with Jesus?

We will make disciples. We will also develop leaders.

****Develop Leaders (2 Timothy 2:1-6)*

The Apostle Paul told Timothy to pass the torch of what he had learned to those around him.

And we believe that one of the most important tasks for the Elders and staff and other key leaders in these days is the creation of a leadership pipeline that trains others in what is central to our ministry.

For the last two years the Elders have hosted a Spring Leadership Series where we have focused on our church's core values and key biblical themes.

We want to build these values into the lives of those who are serving in ministry roles.

If you're already leading, we want to help you lead better. If you have a desire to learn to lead, we want to help you take a next step, even if that's a first step, toward leading.

The third leg of our ministry table is very near and dear to my heart. We will make disciples and develop leaders - and we will launch ministries.

****Launch Ministries*

Here are a couple of irrefutable truths:

****Christians who don't serve, don't grow.*

****The Great Commission doesn't move forward unless Christians serve.*

So, we will give attention to deploying Christ-followers into ministry, both inside and outside of the church.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul said to one first-century servant-leader. ***[Colossians 4:17] Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry that you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."***

Two thousand years later, we don't know anything about Archippus and we have no idea WHAT this "ministry" was that he received in the Lord.

It could have been anything. It could have involved serving widows and orphans, teaching children, evangelizing in the marketplace, leading a home fellowship group, or anything else.

So, here is a 2017 rendition of Colossians 4:17:

[Colossians 4:17] Say to _____, (insert your name) “Take heed to the ministry that you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

I mean, if Archippus received a ministry in the Lord, why not you?

***Some at Northwest are serving in some of the organized ministries here.

Teaching Sunday School
Leading a Care Group
Serving on the Missions Committee
Serving on the Praise Team or working with technology
They are Elders, Deacons, Ministry Co-coordinators.

***Some are serving in certain ministries because the Lord has placed on their hearts some special task.

Bread and Water
Food Pantry
ESL
FPU
Operation Christmas Child

***Some are serving in ways that operate outside of Northwest.

Threads of Love (Joe and Liz Page)
MOTE (Chappy Dave and Sandee Waldon)
Youth for Christ (LeRoy and Jackie Jacobson)

It’s exciting to see how many people are serving!

We believe that the church is not a destination. The church is a launch pad for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16). And we believe that every Christian is a ministry “somebody” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

So, we want to see every person at our church deployed in ministry.

Now, I am the point person, designated by the Elders, to push this part of our mission forward. So...

As you consider what Paul would say to you about the “Archippus ministry” you have **“received in the Lord,”** please let me know what it is so that I can pray for you, support and equip you, and cheer you on.

And please let me know if you’d like to join a team I am building to help deploy 2017 “Archippus Christians” into service.

We will make disciple and develop leaders and launch ministries. And, we will plant churches.

****Plant Churches*

Under this heading...

...ONE, we are going to continue to nurture our relationship with Encuentro. As Manuel Abarca and I have discussed, we’d like to offer the model of a Spanish-speaking congregation within an existing English-speaking church to others.

...TWO, we are going to be prayerfully looking for other groups with distinct languages or ethnicities who might want to “plant” a congregation within Northwest, much as Encuentro has done.

...THREE, we are going to be prayerfully focusing attention on “less-reached” language groups and ethnicities in San Antonio where we might nurture a healthy congregation outside of Northwest.

...FOUR, we are going to be thinking internationally - as we are currently thinking about Chile, South America - to assist in establishing healthy congregations outside of our “Jerusalem and Judea.”

Our Mission is to “Help you take next steps with Jesus so that you can help others take next steps with Jesus.”

Our Mission Strategy is to make disciples, develop leaders, launch ministries, and plant churches.

And we will pursue all of this within a thoroughly biblical framework. And there are some distinctive biblical values that we will honor as we fulfill our Mission.

We want these values to ooze out of every ministry pore here.

- **VALUES**

There are lots of graces that are held up as values in the New Testament. We value ALL that the Bible values. But there are six that especially describe Northwest's passions, giftings, and aspirations.

These values aren't new to Northwest. They have proven, over the years to "fit" who we are and who we aspire to be. With every passing year, they are becoming more and more integrated into our church's culture.

- **BIBLE - LOVING AND LIVING THE BIBLE**

Every sermon, every ABF, every Care Group and children's Sunday School class, and every Women's and Men's study is centered around the Bible. This has long been a Northwest distinctive and it will continue to be.

- **HOME - BUILDING FAITH AT HOME**

This summer's great Family Growth Gatherings (way to go, Jeff and Pam and volunteers!) highlighted our commitment to see homes become places of spiritual nurture.

- **WITNESS - BRINGING OUR FRIENDS TO JESUS**

Jeff highlighted recently in a message the wonderful story of Hector and Ron. We want our church to be more and more vitally involved in helping those who are far from God come near.

- **GENUINENESS - MASKS-OFF RELATING**

When you come to Northwest, you come to a church that is committed to genuine relating, going deep, not pretending. Masks-off relating is a legacy trait around here. Taking off the masks of pretending happens regularly in Care Groups, one-on-one coffees, conversations in the hallway. It's what we do.

- **GENEROSITY - LIVING AND GIVING GENEROUSLY**

We are inspired to be generous with time, talent, and treasure inside and outside of Northwest as faithful stewards because of God's extravagant generosity towards us.

- **PRAYER - DEPENDING ON GOD TO DO WHAT ONLY HE CAN DO WHEN WE ASK HIM**

We love to see the life-transforming and often surprising things that God does when our prayers and the rest of our lives are characterized by dependence on Him. Why bother with trying to accomplish things in our insignificant strength?

Whether you were already aware of these values or not, I hope you've experienced them at Northwest and that they motivate you to take "next steps."

I'll wrap up now with a couple of thoughts about vision.

The vocabulary of vision invites us to get out our artist's easels and paint a picture of our church's preferred future.

So, as we look at Northwest, or when we imagine others looking at Northwest, we want them to see a group of Christ-followers who are:

- **VISION**

...passionately pursue life-changing relationships with God, with each other, and with our world.

...being unleashed into Jesus-centered service, both inside and outside the church, so that our impact for God is way out of proportion to our size, making a difference that can only be explained by God's power and presence.

...praying for, working toward, and celebrating lives changed by the grace, power, and love of God.