

## **Mission and History**

Vision Sunday—it is a Sunday when we review where we have come from as a church family and where we believe God is leading us into the future. It is important to remember the Church is the family of God. The church is not a building. It says on our sign out front “Central Peninsula Church... Meets Here.” The biblical image of the church as being a “body” is to illustrate we at CPC are a group of saved, Christ-filled, people acting as one to represent Jesus Christ on the San Francisco Peninsula and the world. These vision Sundays are important because they help us clarify where we see God leading us, which helps us all to head in the same direction as we try to impact our community for Christ.

We should all understand the vision of our church might change from time to time and season to season as circumstances change in the church and the culture around us. But what doesn't change, is our mission. Hopefully, most of you can recite what our mission is right now. Our mission is to make and mature more followers of Christ. This comes out of the great commission spoken by Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20. “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.”

Something else that does not change is our Core Values. We value Worship, Community, Grace, The Bible, Evangelism, and Leadership of Elders rather than one lead pastor or individual. These are all foundational for who we are as a church and have not changed for the past 50 years of our existence. If you are interested in more information about our core values, you can go to our website and click on New Here.

I have said our vision might change and it has over the years. I'd like to give you a brief recent history of our vision. In 2004 our vision was “to disciple, deploy, and evangelize enough devoted followers of Jesus to plant a new church on the peninsula by 2010.” As we researched the various possibilities, we became convinced the best way to ensure success was not to do a church plant but to become a multisite church, where we remain one church but have additional campuses. This allowed us to take advantage of our “big church” financial and personnel resources when starting up a “small church” campus.

At first, we believed God was leading us to start our first campus south of Foster City, but again as time went on through a series

of events, we realized it would be better to start our first campus to the North. We actually opened our North campus a year earlier than our 2010 goal, and in 2009 the North campus was opened in the Mills High School Theatre. This campus is now called New North Church.

At times course corrections are required to get to where you want to go just like a sailing journey or a road trip. Events and conditions change causing a change in planning. In 2012, we launched our South campus in Redwood City. About four years after that, we began looking for a more suitable venue. Just at the right time, God opened up an amazing and generous opportunity to relaunch the South campus in the Fox theatre in downtown Redwood City. In August of 2017, CPC South opened at the Fox Theatre with Dom Rivera as our new campus pastor. Here again, we can see a course correction as circumstances changed. God's plan is a dynamic plan.

In 2015, we announced a 2020 vision statement, which was “By the year 2020 CPC would make and mature 5,000 followers of Christ on multiple campuses with sustainable facilities.” By 2016 the North campus, which had started with 200 people in 2009, was approaching 1,000 in attendance on a Sunday morning. This rapid growth along with the strong leadership, which developed there, caused us to reevaluate the best way to move forward for this campus. We began to realize it would stunt their growth if we kept them tethered to our existing campus structure. So in 2017 New North Church was launched. It has been a year since their launch, and they are doing well with all the challenges and excitement of starting a new venture.

Because of this course correction in our vision, we realized that we had to revisit what God was saying through these significant changes at CPC. The elders have been on a challenging but exciting time of prayer, study, and deliberation for the past year.

## **Culture Problem and Vision**

Towards the second half of last year, the elders collectively started to feel the need to revisit CPC's vision in light of the things that were just described about in Vision 2020. We prayed about it, discussed it, studied other churches, read relevant books together, deeply considered the unique and evolving environment God has placed us in and ultimately initiated a process, which included a 2-day retreat, exclusively focused on vision.

Our primary objective at the beginning of this process was to get clarity and consensus around what we have named our *Beyond*

***the Horizon Vision.*** Essentially looking out into the future and attempting to discern a vision of where God is leading and guiding us over the next ten years—where he would have us focus and grow as a church.

This required us to dig deep into understanding the people we minister to and the communities we live in. We started by considering all of the most significant issues and/or problems facing our communities. As you can imagine, they are numerous. We started with 14, narrowed those down to 7 and as we leaned further in, realized many of the issues or problems stem from a basic primary issue, the broad adoption of a Christ-less worldview.

So much of the stress, hopelessness, isolation, angst, and ambient anxiety emanates from a pursuit of the elusive “good life” promised through wealth, security, comfort, experiences, relational excitement, freedom, autonomy, and etc. A worldview devoid of the person and truths of God, which promises this ever elusive good life, stands in stark contrast to what Jesus has taught us.

So what is an accurate characterization of a culture pursuing this good life on their own? Essentially it is the pursuit of a kingdom without a King. It is a desired reality that strives for the achievement and accumulation of all the things deemed essential for happiness, security, and well-being. All chased without need of a sovereign King, an all-knowing Creator, a loving Savior. The ultimate goal is dependent upon man—people, things, and achievement. The inevitable end point is disappointment and disillusion, and the effects on the culture we live in are stunning.

***Segregation and Division***—ethnically, politically, religiously, and along class lines

***Disconnectedness and Loneliness***—from all forms of community including familial.

***Life Balance***—virtually impossible except for a very select few.

***Spiritual Vacuum***—no time for or need of God

If we are honest with ourselves, even as believers, we too find much of our own lives and stories caught up in or significantly impacted by these enormous cultural dynamics.

While this futile striving is rampant throughout our country and our world, it is particularly acute and devastating in the Bay Area, particularly on the peninsula. This pursuit of a kingdom without a King is our core problem, which has manifested itself into a million others.

And so this is the place where we firmly believe we are called: to intentional, Christ-like cultural engagement. As followers of Christ, we have absolute confidence there is a different and better way to live, and it is found only in Him.

**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)**

This is the message we have to bring!

Our vision is for CPC to unleash a relentless wave of Spirit-filled believers who are uniquely equipped for thoughtful and loving engagement with the people on the Peninsula. However, for the wave to be truly relentless, the power of the Holy Spirit needs to be overwhelmingly active in each of us. This leads to the second component of our ***Beyond the Horizon Vision.***

CPC has always taught the truth of Scripture well, and we fully intend to continue to do so. What we may not have always done well—and now believe we are called to moving forward—is intentionally helping us each grow in our relationship with Christ. Essentially our spiritual formation:

Let me ask you a few questions:

- Has your recent growth been more in the knowledge about Christ or in your relationship with Him?
- How is your relationship with Christ different from three years ago?
- Can you identify specific ways your relationship with Christ has grown?
- Do you have a longing to know Him more?
- If so, how would you go about knowing Him more?
- What are potential categories or areas of growth?
- How can CPC help?

Both for the inherent value and joy found in knowing Him, and for the ability to impact our culture and communities, our vision includes implementing a very intentional, sustainable spiritual formation strategy, which will enable each CPC'er to walk down a path toward spiritual maturity irrespective of where one happens to be on their journey.

This emphasis on spiritual formation and cultural engagement is embedded into our ten-year vision. Here it is:

**In the next ten years, CPC will engage in spiritual formation at a magnitude that will propel us into thoughtful and gracious cultural engagement on the San Francisco Peninsula to ignite both personal and societal transformation.**

This single sentence is the result of many hours of prayer, discussion, reflection, and editing. This is what we are convinced God is calling us to. As elders, we are captivated by the prospect of realizing this vision and what it will mean both to us as individuals and to the society into which He has placed us. Know this is no small undertaking. It won't come without cost. So we ask and invite you to embrace and give of yourselves to this vision. Together, and with God's help, in ten years both we and those He has called us to minister to, can be changed in ways that have value throughout eternity.

Our prayer and our hope is God will use this body to represent Kingdom values to our broken communities.

*Segregation and Division*—to model Unity

*Disconnectedness and Loneliness*—to embrace Community

*Life Balance*—to experience Peace

*Spiritual Vacuum*—to follow Jesus

Our visioning process spans from this ten-year vision to the necessary steps, strategies and tactics required right now. With the help of staff and members of the body, we are developing a comprehensive approach, which will lead and guide us. Next, we will talk about the essential pillars that are foundational to our new vision.

## Pillars

Imagine yourself on an adventurous road trip—you're on a long, windy road with mountains ahead. And your destination is off in the distance beyond the mountains. You're really excited about reaching your destination—there are great things ahead—but you can't quite see it. And maybe it's not quite clear how to get there. So, you develop some strategies on how to reach your ultimate destination and focus on closer mile markers along the way.

Our beyond the horizon vision is that destination we are trying to reach. It's aspirational and ten years into the future, but we can see ahead to a time whereby God's grace, deep spiritual formation, and gracious cultural engagement have truly ignited personal and societal transformation.

And like your road trip, we need strategies and mile markers to help us achieve our vision. We are calling those mile markers our pillars. We believe God has given us four major ideas that provide clarity to our vision over the next three years.

Other ways to think about these pillars are they are the strategic objectives in the long-range plan. Or they are the big "hows" to get to our big "what."

Let's review those pillars now.

## Spiritual Formation

The first pillar is Spiritual Formation.

**Spiritual Formation—we will develop and initiate personal and corporate spiritual formation practices and rekindled community group ministry.**

As you have heard, CPC's mission is to make and mature more followers of Christ. When it comes to maturing in our faith, this involves spiritual formation. It involves growing and following Jesus as he uniquely calls each of us. There are certain practices that are very intentional and can be transformational in this area. Some are individual, and some occur within a group. We anticipate our community group ministry to be a key area in which formation can take place.

This is not just adding something else on our to-do list. This is about growing into who God wants us to be. And it starts with being with Jesus.

With this, imagine all of us uniting together to embrace these spiritual formation practices. Imagine all of us learning and experiencing in deeper ways how to be with Jesus, how to become more like Jesus, and how to do what Jesus did in more effective ways. Then imagine the effect of this on our own lives, our families, our church, our communities, and workplaces.

## Cultural Engagement

The second pillar is Cultural Engagement.

**We will thoughtfully and graciously engage with three cultural domains in our surrounding communities by optimizing our resources.**

Being thoughtful and gracious with those around us is key to this second pillar. Being thoughtful means having a strategy and a plan. Being gracious to find common ground with those who need Jesus is vitally important. Just as Jesus has changed our lives, we seek to introduce Jesus to those in various domains—or groups—around us. It might be young families who are seeking to raise their kids here on the San Francisco Peninsula where the culture is pulling in so many directions. Or it might be professionals—we are in a place where people come to work, study, and find fortune. Other potential domains include the arts, government, and sports. Since we have been blessed with many resources, we desire to be excellent stewards and use our resources to reach people in need of a Savior.

## Worship

The third pillar is around worship practices and environment.

**We will revitalize our worship environment and practices to nurture greater engagement, participation, unity, belonging and expectancy of meeting with our Lord Jesus.**

This has to do with our corporate worship—what we experience on a Sunday. Worship is one of CPC's core values. We know worship practices need examination and review at times. We want to arrive Sunday with a high anticipation of meeting with Jesus. And this is very much related to spiritual formation. Worship is formative in our growth as believers. It starts with an understanding of why we worship. Worship is in response to who God is, what he has done, what he is doing now, and what he will do in the future. Imagine CPC being a place where people come with a heart of worship and actively respond to the God of the universe with their worship.

## Equipping

Finally, the fourth pillar is equipping.

**We will equip our people through vibrant leadership development unifying CPC in both vision and passion.**

This is for all of us. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. God has given each of us a gifting to minister, and we desire for there to be a common culture around leadership. There can be many facets to a training program, and we want to develop and build a culture of equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry.

Those are the four pillars. The four areas we see God leading us in the next three years to reach our ten-year *Beyond the Horizon Vision*—our ultimate destination. Expect to see more details on these as we continue to roll out this vision. A group of around 40 people from the body, staff, and elders have been working on strategies to implement each of these pillars—and there are some great ideas coming out of that work with the goal of fulfilling our mission to make and mature more followers of Christ. It is an exciting time to be at CPC! We welcome any questions or dialogue around this vision—feel free to reach out to any of the elders. We also welcome your prayers for this vision!

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### **Life in Babylon** | Mark Mitchell

I want to take a few moments and offer some thoughts from the Scriptures about what you've heard this morning from our elders regarding our vision ([cpc.org/vision](http://cpc.org/vision)). What makes our vision so compelling is the **why**? The **why** isn't just that we live in a post-Christian nation, but we live in an area that's arguably more like that than any other in this country. This area is defined by the idea of building a kingdom apart from a true King.

For example, our local tech moguls are trying to solve the problem of mortality. Startups are trying to prolong life, indefinitely, if possible. Larry Ellison told his biographer, "Death has never made any sense to me." So he's poured more than \$430 million into research on how to do away with death.

Our tech companies seem to believe they can perfect the world. Just listen to their goals: Facebook wants, "to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together." Microsoft wants to, "empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."

There's a strong current of faith in this area, but not in God. In fact, the Bay Area is among the least religious regions of the US with only 42% of adults saying they believe in God with any certainty, and only about 3% to 5% attending church. Traditional religion in the Bay Area is being replaced with faith in the power of technology and science. It's a creed that says poverty, disease, and racism is solvable without God. Again, it's a kingdom without a King.

So what does it mean for us to be followers of Jesus in this culture? What does it mean for us as a church to be God's people in this place? Do we do what we've always done, or do we somehow need to adapt to this new reality around us?

Historically, churches have taken one of three approaches to living in a post-Christian culture. One approach is to **fight** against it. It's the mindset of this area being evil and the church being good. So we fight. It's the us versus them idea. Another option isn't to fight but to **flee**. Since we're surrounded with so much evil, we create our little Christian ghetto and insulate ourselves from the evil around us. It's the classic escapist mentality.

Finally, a third option is to just kind of **assimilate**. Instead of fighting the culture or fleeing from it, we become like the culture. There are a lot of churches that think if they can just sort of blend in, they'll eventually be able to have an impact. But most often they end up looking so much like the culture; they quit seeking to change it. Notice in the first two approaches, we don't change at all, but in the third approach, we may change too much.

Today I want to propose another way. It comes from a chapter out of the history of Israel. Their situation was much like ours. The people of Israel, after years of God warning them through the prophets, were taken into exile by the Babylonians. The Babylonians had an interesting policy with nations they conquered. They'd bring all the so-called significant people back to Babylon and leave those who were poor and uneducated. The idea was in bringing them to Babylon they'd eventually assimilate into Babylonian culture, and so they'd no longer pose a threat.

The prophet Jeremiah was one of those left in Jerusalem. But God was still speaking through Jeremiah, and God instructed him to write a letter to the Jewish exiles living 1,200 miles away in Babylon. In this letter, he tells them how to live as exiles. He tells them how to be God's people in a foreign land.

As we'll see, there were some things that would stay the same—they had the same God and the same Torah; but there were also some things, which needed to change—they were in a foreign land; they weren't citizens; they were exiles surrounded by people who spoke a different language, had different customs, and worshipped different gods.

And, really, this is our situation today. In fact, several times in the New Testament we're called exiles (1 Peter 1:1). This is really not our home. In one of Paul's letters, he said, "**Our citizenship is in heaven**" (Phil. 3:20). So how do we live in this place that's **not** our home? How do we live in this place that isn't the same as when we started out 50 years ago? Do we fight? Do we flee? Do we just blend in? For sure, some things will always stay the same, but some things will need to change.

In this letter to the exiles, God says through Jeremiah several things to help us answer these questions.

### **Settle Down and Stay Awhile**

The first thing he says is found in Jeremiah 29:4–6.

**This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant**

**gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.**

What he says here is settle down and stay awhile. Unpack your suitcases because you'll be a long time. You don't take the time to build houses, plant gardens, and invest in long-term relationships like marriage if you're going to be gone soon.

In the same way, as followers of Jesus, we're exiles here. We don't really belong here; this isn't our home. But that doesn't mean we don't settle down and make a life here.

It's interesting there were other prophets unlike Jeremiah who did get carried off to Babylon, but many of them were false prophets. And they were saying the exact opposite—things like, they shouldn't settle down because any day God would defeat the Babylonians, and they'd all get to return home to Jerusalem. Down in verses 8–9 God says, *“Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you... They're prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them.”* There'll always be people who offer a feel-good message; a quick fix, an easy escape from reality.

Notice how God addresses this letter to *“all those I carried into exile”* (verse 4). God says, “You're here because I brought you here.” Some of you are here in the Bay Area, and you don't really want to be here. Maybe you came here because of a job, and this is the last place you want to be. But what if God brought you here? What if he wants you to make a difference here?

### **Seek the Welfare of the City**

You see, not only are we to settle down and stay awhile, but we're to seek the welfare of this place. Look at verse 7.

**Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”**

That's quite different from fighting this culture or even fleeing from it. Instead, we're to do what we can to build it up and bless it. When God says to seek the peace and prosperity of this place he uses the word *shalom*. Seek its *shalom*—that's talking about the flourishing of a place. Do everything you can to help this place flourish economically, socially, and spiritually.

If that isn't enough, pray for it. Those exiles knew all about praying. In Psalm 122 they were taught to *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”* That made sense to them. They loved Jerusalem. But now they're told to pray for the peace of Babylon, and that didn't make sense at all. They didn't love Babylon! But do you see what God is doing? God is calling them to love Babylon and the people in it. You can't pray for people unless you care about them, love them, and want God's best for them.

As you've heard, a big part of this new vision has to do with transforming the culture around us. We love this place. We want

this place to flourish. We want it to continue to thrive economically. We want it to be a place where not just the wealthy can live, but where all can live. We want it to be a place of beautiful diversity. We want it to be a place with great schools, great parks, great art, and a great baseball team. We'll not be a church that's against this place. We'll not be a church that flees this place. We'll be a church that seeks the welfare of this place and prays for it.

### **Trust in God's Promise**

But that doesn't mean we assimilate and just blend in, either. So in the latter half of this letter, God addresses what our relationship with Him ought to look like, and the first thing we need to do is trust in God's promise.

You see, for the Jews living in Babylon, the question still remained—what does our future look like? Imagine being a Jew living in Babylon. Will we ever see the Promised Land again? Will we ever worship in Jerusalem's temple? Look what God says about that.

**This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (verse 10–11)**

These words are the John 3:16 of American cultural Christianity. They show up on plaques sold at Cracker-Barrel, Facebook walls, and even tattoos. Many understand these verses to say everything will turn out good for me. If I just follow my heart, God will bless me. But that's not the prophet Jeremiah; that's Deepak Chopra.

The truth is this isn't a promise made primarily to individuals but to the nation Israel. And this promise isn't primarily about a wonderful future just around the corner of your life, but for 70 years from now.

In some ways, this would be both discouraging and encouraging for the exiles. It would be discouraging because nothing would change for 70 years. So if you were anywhere over ten years old, you're not going home. You'll spend the rest of your life in exile. There's hope for your children or maybe your grandchildren to get back home, but you'll never get back.

However, there is also a wonderful promise here. God said, “I have great plans for you. You have a bright future; you have something to hope in and look forward to. My intention isn't to harm you but to prosper you.” Although for most of the people who heard this it didn't mean they were going home, it did mean they could live in hope. God is at work, even in exile. God has a plan for his people, and it's good. Though the present is hard, his plan is to prosper them and not to harm them. To really appreciate this promise the people in exile had to take the long view.

God has a long view plan for us, in Christ. That plan isn't for our destruction but our well-being, and it won't be totally fulfilled

until we arrive at our final home in heaven. Meanwhile, we're being conformed into the image of Christ as we live in exile.

It's important we as a church take the long view. CPC is 51 years old. We've enjoyed lots of success. We've grown. We've built buildings. We've planted a church on the North Peninsula. We've sent teams and supported Mission Partners all over the world. But what will CPC look like 50 years from now? I believe God has great plans for this church. Most of us here won't get to see it. But what we do now will lay the groundwork for what we'll become. Some things I hope will never change—our Mission, Core Values, and commitment to teaching God's Word. But some things must change. Our strategies must change.

Here's an illustration: Beginning in May 1804, Lewis and Clark set off with the Corps of Discovery to find a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. After months of paddling canoes up the Missouri River, they finally came to the headwaters. As they looked over a nearby bluff, they expected to see the Columbia River flowing down to the Pacific. But instead, they looked up at the daunting beauty of the Rocky Mountains. Up until that point, they traveled on water by canoe. But those skills wouldn't be much use moving forward. To continue in their quest, they'd need different skills for the terrain ahead.

In many ways, this is where we are today as a church. We can't just preach more, sing louder and start more groups. The landscape has changed. We can either mourn the changing times, or we can adapt and learn new ways of being Christ's church. That's what our new vision is all about. So what if a year from now our worship services, our small groups, or the expectations we had to look different? Will we adapt or will we insist we can canoe on dry land through mountain passes?

Again, we're not throwing out what we believe, our Mission and Core values. But how we express those things and our strategies will need to change—much like Lewis and Clark had to put down their canoes and learn to climb mountains. If we as a church are going to be an agent for God's redemptive work in the Bay Area, we're going to have to open ourselves up to change.

### **Seek the Lord With All Your Heart**

But there's one more thing I want you to see here about our relationship with God, and this is crucial. The people of Israel, who

were living in exile, were called to continue to seek the Lord with all their hearts. Look how this letter ends.

**Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.**  
(verses 12–13)

You see, before we can transform this place, we have to be transformed. We have to seek the Lord with all our hearts—right here in Babylon. We have to resist the lure of false gods around us—money, power, sex, beauty, and fame.

Do you know who was a great example of that? It was a young man named Daniel. Daniel was an exiled Jew who grew up in Babylon, and he even worked for the King, but Daniel had a white-hot faith, and he brought change. He didn't fight. He didn't flee. He didn't assimilate. But he did adapt, and he made a huge difference.

That's why we need a spiritual formation strategy to lead each of us on a pathway toward being Daniel-like men and women. That's why we need to be more deeply rooted in public and private spiritual practices like prayer, the study and practice of God's word, connectedness to a small group, regular vitalized corporate worship, and being equipped to use our gifts.

Only when we're transformed into people with a white-hot faith will we be able to spark transformation in our culture. Only when that happens will more and more people know the good life is a vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus resulting in love, generosity, service, and a true sense of belonging and contentment.

So what we are doing as elders is asking you join us in fulfilling this new vision. Join us in a spiritual formation process, which will transform us so we can thoughtfully and graciously engage with our culture, and contribute to its flourishing. Settle down here and stay awhile. Seek the welfare of this place. Pray for it. Take the long view and trust God has a bright future for you and your children. And most of all, don't cave into our culture, but seek the Lord with all your hearts!