

A Kingdom Prospectus

**A Proposal to
Advance the Kingdom of God
in Gallia County, Ohio**

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A Vision for Gallia County...

The need for vision...

Vision is vital to a people, especially in regard to spirituality. Christianity, sadly, often fails to be authentically “spiritual” – that is to say it seems to fail in being spiritually connected to God. And when there is no heartfelt awareness of God, the vision of His people of Who God is and what He does begins to fade in the minds of individuals and congregations. They invariably become disconnected from His Life, His purposes and His ways. They become empty vessels with forms of righteousness but no substance – they are “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (2 Timothy 3:5 NAS).

The Holy Scriptures say in Proverbs 29:18 that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV). Some translations word it a bit differently. The New American Standard translation says that “where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained....” Either way, the implication is that a congregation forgets its God, wanders away from Him, casts off Godly self-control, and, sooner or later, perishes as a people.

But we *can* be a people who walk intimately with God. Jesus Christ indicated that the eternal life He has offered us is more than an eternal existence in heaven after our bodies have failed and decayed. Eternal life is a personal and corporate experience in knowing God intimately (John 17:3).

Where there is no vision...

While it should not be the intent of a Child of God to become critical of his brethren, let it suffice to say that much opportunity and need lie before us in Gallia County, Ohio. We may be grateful to God for having raised up congregations in southern Ohio who truly love Him and serve Him. But it is my conviction that much more can be realized in the lives of believers than simple church meeting attendance, canned evangelism, and teaching of truths that are not being experienced personally by even those who teach.

Let us be even more specific. For the most part, it has been my observation that there is a deep hunger for spiritual growth in such as these, yet it coexists with an acidic frustration towards those who wield the most influence in their respective congregations. There is a sense that there remains an unwillingness to be sufficiently fluid to change, thereby getting “stuck in a rut” as it were. Also the church is generally failing in effectively engaging the needs of a diverse culture (for example, are we boldly confronting contemporary issues while at the same time dealing with growing Biblical illiteracy in our culture?). Additionally, Christians hesitate in challenging the rising and conflicting ideologies of an increasingly chaotic world, hesitate until the world around us assumes that we either have no opinion on matters such as relativism and morality or that we care so little about our convictions that we fail to act.

Thus, many leave church meetings “hungry” for deeper worship, meaningful teaching, engaging ministries, and a sense that they have encountered life-changing Truth.

Crisis: an Invitation for Change

A predicament like this has some serious long-range implications. First, families are in spiritual peril (the salvation of lost family members is unlikely to ever be realized). Unless Christ is actively sought after by those who are Christians in each family, His power is not revealed in the home. Also, without faithful loved ones to challenge them and “introduce” them to Christ, many (if not most) will not be personally confronted by their need for Christ.

Secondly, the churches themselves are in peril. The future of each congregation is wrapped up in the spiritual destinies of her younger members (those who are, right now, singles, young couples, teens and children). If the younger members are in love with Christ and are excited about what God is doing in their church, then tomorrow is bright: the church can look forward to a far-off future of faithful members. If the younger ones are NOT joyfully engaged by Christ’s presence in their church, the future is dim: they’ll most likely stop coming and the church will die off as its older members pass away. While it should be obvious that this is not advocating neglect in ministering to seniors (who, in turn, have a tremendous opportunity to mentor younger members in their Christian walk) we are acknowledging a realm of need and urgency that tends to be neglected instead.

Finally, the entire community is in jeopardy (not to mention the whole nation if this problem is widespread). A Christian nation becomes pluralistic only when passion for Jesus Christ has become lost among God’s people. Morality erodes as a result of a lost sense of conviction – conviction which is the natural fruit of God’s Spirit’s movement in His people.

Thus, people need arenas wherein they are not only free to worship God (in Spirit and in truth) but are also “taught” how they can more freely worship Him (by those who are, in turn, fully giving themselves over in surrender to God). And what does it mean to worship? It means simply to both declare the infinite worth of God and to live our lives in surrender to His lordship (“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”- Romans 12:1 ^{NIV})

The Time is NOW!

That action is imperative, it is clear. Perhaps what is not so clear is that the time for such action is now. If nothing rises from God’s camp to meet such spiritual hungers and thirsts, counterfeits will move in. Biblical and historical records bear this out and it largely explains the spiritual crisis that America is now suffering.

Still, we have a window of opportunity. People in southern Ohio are looking to the Church to show them the way to satisfaction and fulfillment. While their eyes are still drawn hither, we must allow God to move through us and not allow more to perish in spiritual confusion and disillusionment because of a hard-heartedness on the part of Believers.

With these convictions on my heart and these thoughts taking form in my mind, I have put to paper a possible “strategy” and approach towards a new work in Gallia County.

Part 1 – “C²” – (*Commanded and Commissioned...*):

As God’s people, we are first **commanded** to do two things (Matthew 22:37-39):

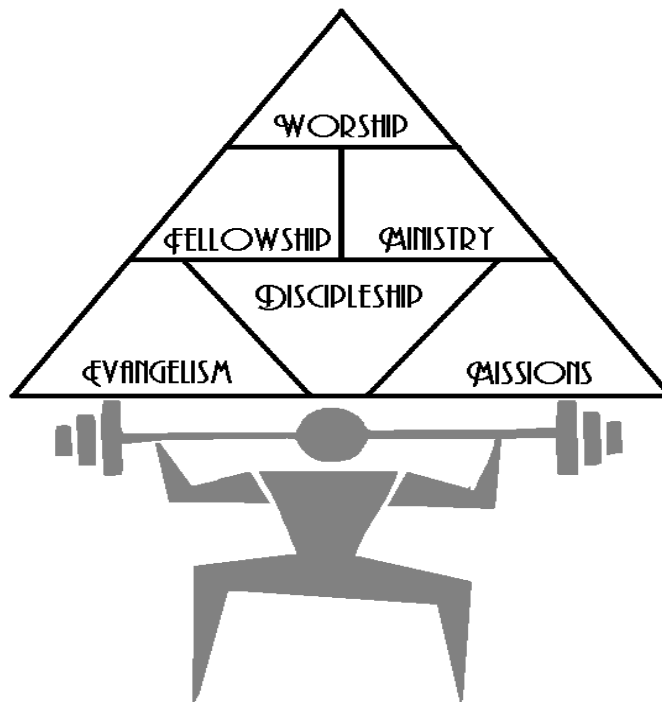
love God with our whole being
and
love others at least as much as we love ourselves

We are also **commissioned** to a particular work (Matthew 28:19-20):

go and make disciples.

These two Great Commandments and this Great Commission mean that there must be an inward and outward focus to the life of a church body. It may be said that there are **Six Functions** of the church: Worship, Evangelism, Missions, Discipleship, Ministry and Fellowship. All are necessary parts to a growing and healthy body and none are complete without the healthy manifestations of the others.

This is what it means to have a “healthy church body”.



It is not the purpose of this document to thoroughly extrapolate the philosophy of each component of the life and work of a church. It need only be said here that God's people must actively and deliberately engage each component, otherwise one of these vital elements will be neglected to the detriment of the other elements and the whole body will suffer. A church body must deliberately seek God's fullness in each aspect of its life.

The new work that we would seek to establish in Gallia County would maintain as central to its mission, the full development of these six priorities in the congregation at large and in the individual disciple's experience. Success will not be determined by the number of programs that this new work offers, nor will it even be decided by the numbers of participants attending. In fact, at first we must seek to do fewer things (than most churches), but to do them with excellence (with this commitment to excellence being a common denominator in all our endeavors) as we offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1).

I might add that, inasmuch as each of these elements should be the natural result of an abiding walk with Christ (see John 15:5), we will seek to develop these as characteristics of members, providing avenues (events and activities) in which to realize growth.

Our Mission... should we choose to accept it...

Our mission will be to "***know God; connect with others; and make God known to the nations.***" We would seek that each aspect of our program of ministry complement each of the other aspects. We would seek God's specific leadership in the development and implementation of the activities and methodologies we would employ in the program of ministry of this new work.

This is an extremely **bold** undertaking, yet it is certainly within the parameters of God's work on earth through His children by His Spirit. It is an **impossible** undertaking, yet ***with God, all things are possible*** (Matthew 19:26, Philippians 4:13).

Part 2 – "From Foyer to Kitchen":

Let us always be careful as servants of God to not confuse our work with the work of the Holy Spirit.

"When He (the Holy Spirit) comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me (Jesus); in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.... The Spirit of Truth... will guide you into all truth..." (John 16:8-11, 13 [NIV]).

We cannot change hearts, try as we might. What we *can* do, however, is be fully responsive to God and fully obedient to His will, allowing God to affect the lives of those around us. Furthermore, our specific pursuit in the ministries of a new work in Gallia County would be to provide ***environments*** for individuals to encounter God.

There's No Place Like Home

I submit that each program of the church shall be aligned with one of these three environments (conceptualization derived from the video presentation. *From Foyer to Kitchen: the North Point Strategy*, with Andy Stanley, North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, GA).

The

The first is the *Foyer* in which the atmosphere of the event or activity keeps the “guest” in mind. A *Foyer* is the place in our home in which a newcomer enters. It is in the *Foyer* that we intentionally seek to make the *guest* feel *welcome*.

Foyer

The *Foyer* for the new work would be the principle gathering during the week. While not exactly a “Seeker Service”, all elements of the service time would be meshed together providing an overall atmosphere of worship and concentration on God. This time would be characterized by a diligent pursuit of “excellence”, genuine worship, and the overarching passion to see people become “connected” with God. Imagine a craftsman being commissioned to fashion a special cup for his king to use to serve the king’s guests. Would the craftsman not spare any pain to present his lord with as fine an object as he could? In a similar way, we will seek to “craft” a time of worship together into which our God pour His love and life to overflowing.

Finally, our *guests* should not only be made to feel *welcomed*, but should be made to feel a *part*. It is in the *Foyer* that we are presented the opportunity to “invite” our guests to enter into the next level.

The

The next “environment” that we would seek to provide is the *Living Room*. The *Living Room* is where we invite our *guests* to enter into a deeper level of relationship and become networked into the overall life of the church. Just as the *Foyer* is where we meet our *guests*, the *Living Room* is where we invite our guests to become *friends*.

Living Room

Functionally, the *Living Room* is made up of those special events that we may host as a church with a more informal quality to them. The aim of these is to simply call those who have only been visitors to become members. The dynamics of such events are structured so that *relationships* are begun, strengthened, and clarified. The single most important goal in these events is the introduction of individuals into the ministry of small group discipleship and encouragement groups.

Furthermore, it is within the confines of *Living Room* activities that God’s people have opportunity to begin to genuinely experience *koinoinia*.

The

The third arena for meeting Christ in the life of the church is the place where one may most feel comfortable in sharing himself. It is symbolized by the place in our homes where we are not simply *guests* or even visiting *friends*: we are *family*. One comes to the *Foyer* to see if she is welcome; she comes to the *Living Room* to get to know the people; but she goes to the *Kitchen* to truly belong.

Kitchen

The ministry of the *Kitchen* is embodied in the small group. These are at times referred to as Discipleship Groups, Family Groups, or Cell Groups. Even a more traditional church model has a rough equivalent in the ministry of its Sunday School classes. The function of these small groups would be to disciple, encourage and involve in service those who are involved. Additionally, these small groups would be the backbone of the work’s prayer ministry and would also promote positive accountability.

As with the other two environments, these also must be met with prayerful deliberation and intentionality. In our proposed new work, small group leaders would receive appropriate preparation (from enlistment of said leaders to training of those leaders) as well as consistent support, encouragement, and recognition.

Part 3 – “ Each Piece of the Puzzle ” :

Let us recognize the value of each component of the activities of a healthy, growing church. Let us further recognize the importance of each part of the process involved in drawing someone into the family of Believers that we call the local church.

If we neglect just one function of the church, we end up with an unhealthy body. If we neglect only part of the process of assimilating Believers into the life of the church, we no longer have the means to prepare individuals to fulfill the functions of the church and we still end up with an unhealthy body.

Not only that, we also experience the tragedy of Christians who do not enter fully into the life that God has in mind for them and they miss their divine destiny.

An Invitation...

While there are many logistics that have yet to be defined and addressed, consider the timeliness of this invitation. Has God prepared *you* for such a time as this? Is it possible that God desires to involve *you* in such a new endeavor?

Is it possible that He is moving your life, your walk with Him, and your skills and gifts to meet the need?

When God comes, inviting us to join Him, we tend to look with our physical eyes, and a thousand reasons as to why it will never work come to the forefront of our minds. But before you look away because of what your physical eyes are telling you, consider the promises of God to you.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” – 2 Peter 1:3-4

“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things (all your needs) will be given to you as well.” – Matthew 6:33

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” – Luke 11:9-10