



THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

Connecting Chicago disciples with each other, the Midwest and the world

www.chicagochurch.org

November 25, 2007

THE VISION: Update from the Evangelists

*In May of this year, a visionary plan was presented to the Chicago Church. In this article, A.T. Arneson gives us an update on **The Vision** from the evangelists' perspective.*

It might be hard to believe, but it was a little more than six months ago that the entire Chicago Church of Christ gathered at the Stephen's Convention Center in early May to hear about an exciting and visionary plan for our entire body of believers. We were there for the unveiling of a ten-year vision for our church. As we celebrate our 25th anniversary as a church this year, not only are we looking back at all that God *has* done, but we are faithfully looking forward to all that He *will* do.

Our ten-year vision calls for us to have fully functioning ministry centers within a 30-minute drive of every person in the Chicagoland area. Each ministry center will have a central leadership core that is made up of an evangelist involved in preaching God's Word, elders who are shepherding the hearts of the members, a worship leader who is ensuring that our Sunday worship experience is outstanding, a teacher who will keep us grounded in the truths of God and a youth and family minister who is working with our families to ensure the passing of spiritual conviction from one generation to another. Inherent to our vision, and crucial to its success, is that the Chicago Church is growing both spiritually and numerically.

Once the May 6th event was completed, we set out to accomplish several goals. First, we wanted to keep an open line of inspiration and communication flowing in the church. We wanted to be able to keep the church connected and updated through great stories and milestones. So we set a one-year goal of completely redeveloping our church website. Through much hard work on the part of Kurt Roskopf and others, we are excited to announce that this goal has been met.

Secondly, we wanted to really drive home some of the core convictions upon which *The Vision* is founded. We sat down with the ministry center leaders and came up with eight lessons that we would teach in our ministries from June through September. The lessons included the following topics: Evangelism, gift-discovery workshops,

multi-generational lessons, cross-cultural awareness and, of course, what it means to be a disciple who will give up everything, go anywhere and be whatever God calls them to be. We are very excited that not only was this objective accomplished in all of the ministries, but it has helped to deepen all of our understanding and convictions in connection with *The Vision*.

Lastly, we are very excited about the unity we are building in our new leadership model here in the church. Tony Singh, Darren Gauthier and myself find our hearts being knit together in great unity as we are called to lead the charge for *The Vision*. And there are several other congregational leaders who have really stepped up to the challenge of building their part of the wall to ensure that the goals of *The Vision* will be met. Recently, Steve Staten (Teacher), Dave Pocta (Youth and Family) and Dave Eastman (Worship) met with me, Tony, Darren and the elders to discuss the development of a three-year plan in each of their corresponding areas of service that would keep us on track with *The Vision*. We left inspired, faithful and resolved to do the work necessary. We look forward to sharing all of these great plans with the church in the coming months.

Amid all of these exciting plans and goals, we must stay committed to having an outward focus and planting spiritual seeds wherever we go. But we must always remember that we can only plant and water the seeds. It is God who will make them grow. And we are grateful to God that the Chicago Church is growing once again! The ministry staff set a goal to see 100 people added to our number from September through December of this year. And we are almost halfway there!

I believe with all of my heart that we will see many miraculous things happen in the next ten years. And I believe the Chicago Church is entering its next 25 years with greater faith, greater wisdom, deeper convictions and an even greater awareness of the need to evangelize our city than ever before. We are maturing as a church. We are awakening again to be a great light to a metropolitan area in great need of salvation. And to God be the glory!

THE VISION: The Next Generation

It is an amazing honor to be called the children of God. No doubt each of us can distinctly remember our calling and our adoption. We can vividly recount our first impressions of God's family and the love we felt as we became part of it. We can recall the gratitude that filled our hearts as we first processed what we had received. We were eager to share it. We longed to see others taste it. We were saved.

Our Father's passion has always been for us to bask in His grace and goodness. He desires our hearts to be surrendered to Him and His family. And He greatly desires for us to spread His mercy to our children. God called Abraham to leave his physical family and begin a new spiritual family that would be known as God's people, God's family. He told Abraham in **Genesis 12** and **Genesis 15** that this group of people would be filled with His offspring—His children, His grandchildren and His great-grandchildren.

God later made a covenant with Moses and His people at Sinai (**Exodus 19-33**), establishing spiritual boundaries, civil laws and a moral code so they would know how to honor Him and treat each other. As He was about to deliver them into the Promised Land, He reminded them of this covenant and called them to teach their children all of these things, as is recorded in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

This scripture became the creed of the Israelite people. They took it to heart. It is called the *Sh'ma* (Shema), which is the Hebrew word for *hear*, the first word of the passage. This was the first prayer that a child would learn. It was recited every morning when they woke up and every night when they went to bed. They made small, leather boxes called *tefillin* or *phylacteries* with this scripture inside which they would attach to their foreheads and arms (near the heart) while they would pray. They also placed small metal boxes called *mezuzahs* on the doorframes of their houses, also containing this scripture. It is quite apparent from this and other passages of scripture that God fully intends for us to pass on our faith and our relationship with Him to the next generation.

As a parent of two girls (Hannah, 12, and Madeline, 10), and also needing to regularly address my own weaknesses and sins, I understand the monumental task that's involved

in passing on my faith to my children. There are so many factors that form their spirituality! Here are a few:

Parents: We have been teaching them God's word, praying with them, praying for them, getting advice, having people in our home and modeling our faith daily since they were born.

Other Families: We take family vacations with other disciples' families, have families into our home and have discipling relationships with other families, all of which are being used to influence our children.

Older Kids: We try to make sure our kids spend time with teen and college disciples, to give them heroes in the faith and something tangible to look forward to.

Kingdom Kids: I'm amazed at the incredible teaching curriculum we have in our church. I went through it a few months ago just to see what our kids learn from the cradle to the sixth grade. It's fantastic! I am so grateful to all of the incredible servants who work tirelessly to teach our kids. Thank you!

The Church: We are at every service, no matter where we are in the world. It is who we are. Our kids make it a part of who they are by imitation. They love the church. Every disciple who talks with them and reaches out to them shares God's family with them.

Camp: They talk about camp all year long. Madeline wasn't old enough for our camp, so she went to the Ohio camp last summer. Our kids need to be connected to relationships all over the world.

Other: So many others have helped—babysitters, people who've driven them places, people who've had them over to their homes, singles who've planned outings with them and much, much more.

Our children need to be enveloped in God's family. In each of the ministry centers, we are building our Youth and Family Ministries to share these values. We have been talking about family more. We have been teaching about these biblical concepts. We are training the teen leaders to work more with families. We have also been educating the church on the need for all of the generations represented to reach across and serve one another. We are also in the process of building a partnership in each ministry center. We are striving to have a mature couple working with the families and another couple to coordinate teen activities and Bible studies. In many ministries, we already have this in place.

In summary, *The Vision* for the Chicago Church is clear: "We envision generations of authentic disciples..."

Dave Pocta

Reviews and Previews

Bridge Ministry Campus Devotional

The next Bridge Ministry devotional will be held this Friday, November 30th at 7:00 p.m. The Bridge Ministry supports college-bound high school seniors in making the transition from the teen to campus ministries. Following the bridge ministry devotional, there will be a congregational campus devotional at 8:00 p.m. Both events will be held at the UIC Student Center East, located at 750 S. Halsted Street in Chicago.

Congregational Worship

The entire Chicago Church of Christ will worship together on Sunday, December 16th at 10:00 a.m. The worship service will be held at the Stephen's Convention Center, located at 5555 N. River Road in Rosemont. Our Congregational Drama Team will be presenting a special holiday program, and Bruce and Robyn Williams, former leaders of the Chicago Church of Christ, will be on hand to celebrate with us.

Singles Christmas Ball

The 2007 Singles Christmas Ball, entitled *Save the Last Dance*, will be held Saturday evening, December 15th beginning at 7:30 p.m. The dance will be held at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest, located at 3400 W. Euclid Avenue in Arlington Heights. See your singles ministry leader for more information on ticket sales.

Welcome New Baptisms!

Chicago

- Ziggy Davis
- Mariley Jimenez
- Johanna Torres
- Julian White

DeKalb

- Bethany Lager
- Bret Wienke

Metro

- Pamela Araujo
- Selene Camacho

Central

- Christine Galati

Greater Westland

- Adelle Hill

North

- Jessica Arneson
- Martha Kovler
- Carline Vanjaarsveld
- Willie Washington

Southland

- Courtney Fink

THE VISION: Teachers for the Ministry Centers

In order to discover those individuals whom God has prepared for the important work of teaching, we wish to proceed in the search for more qualified teachers in each of the ministry centers in the Chicago Church. (**James 3:1**) Fortunately, the Chicago Church is dedicated to developing gift-based roles according to the Ephesians 4 model and filling these appointments based on the respect and work that individuals have accomplished.

To further ensure our success in establishing the role of teachers, we are taking steps to locate and train teachers who will responsibly bring out old and new treasures from God's word within our local church family. (**Matthew 13:52**) Since teaching is a spiritual service, we are choosing the requirement of a deacon as a minimum expectation. (**1 Timothy 3:8-10**)

Different Kinds of Teachers

In the church, there are different categories in the realm of the teacher. A teacher may be the wise and respected voice of the flock and a guide to greater biblical understanding. He may be an academic individual with understanding of the biblical languages. A teacher may be the enthusiastic and zealous informer that keeps a flock fed. Or, a teacher may be a great presenter of material that others have prepared. With these differences in mind, the following delineations will be our standards for the role of teacher, based on sound principles, experience and education.

Core Teacher: Trustworthy, seasoned by battle, mature and wise—a respected sage, able to mentor and knowledgeable in a variety of theological disciplines. He has experience leading ministries, has a Master's level degree or is en route in Master's level studies. These teachers establish the teaching foundation and provide guidance for the other teachers.

Scholar: High in academic knowledge with a doctorate (usually a PHD) and has published respected works in his field. It is possible to do scholarly level work without formal credentials, but credentials are of real value. It should be said that a scholar may or may not necessarily be a seasoned veteran in ministry.

Certified Teacher: Must have a Bible degree or well en route in a particular program. He must be gifted to present teaching material and accepted by the core teachers and the ministry in which he serves.

Presenting Teacher: Able to make clear presentations and adequately inform groups of various sizes. This role requires known experience and testing in presenting the Gospel. He must be able to understand the material developed by the previously defined teachers.

Miscellaneous Teachers: Includes the women who serve as teachers in some of the same categories, mostly to other women. Both the wives of the teachers and the women who achieve biblical and academic understanding can become part of this vital ministry.

(Continued on back page)

THE VISION: Teachers for the Ministry Centers (Cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

Ministry Center Teachers

A ministry center teacher will be required to counter the winds and the waves that come at the church. Therefore, they should belong to one of the first three categories—either a core, scholar or certified teacher.

An evangelist might be found to be a certified teacher, but he might not serve in the role of ministry center teacher. Let's look at current staff members who have some exposure to biblical education or a teaching role. At the current rate, we should be able to consider the following men as certified teachers

(some of us already are) within two years: A.T. Arneson, James Becknell, Winston Batino, Phil Lasarsky, Jeremy Lefler, Dave Pocta, Steve Staten,

Randy Harris and Verne Wetherholt. Our goal is to be able to have all of the ministry centers set up with a functioning teacher in about eighteen months. If not, we can equip both brothers and sisters as presenting teachers.

Our goal is to have all of the ministry centers set up with a functioning teacher in about eighteen months.

Staff Training and Education

The chief goal of educating staff is to understand Scripture in its original meaning and then to apply it to our lives. Our ministry staff needs a structured track to understand basic theology, exegesis, homiletics (preaching methods), Christian history, world religions, cultural studies, conflict/peacemaking studies and family counseling.

From looking at the list of those obtaining an education, it is evident that we are developing a team that has their area of expertise. This is essential in developing a true proficiency program for all of the speaking staff.

Traditional College Track: Those who were already about halfway or further into a Master's program will make up the base of training staff. The ministers who will receive a degree from an accredited college or university are A.T. Arneson, Dave Pocta, Jeremy Lefler, James Becknell and Winston Batino. Beyond that, here are the goals in regard to educating our ministry staff for the next ten years:

- **In three years:** Four or more ministers with Master of Arts and one with MDiv.
- **In five years:** Six with Masters of Arts, one MDiv. Entire preaching staff through main curriculum.
- **In ten years:** Six with Master of Arts, one PHD and another Doctorate.

The Proficiency Track: All full-time salaried ministers whose roles involve speaking will be trained for a Bachelor's competence of Christian ministry in *The Proficiency Track*. Practically, this means they will be able

to take and pass college level final exams with A-B grades. Other ministry people, whose role/salary does not require this level, have the same option available to them.

This proficiency track involves progress reports that will be monitored by Steve Staten, even though it will be taught by all the teachers here in Chicago, along with occasional guests. Since this track would require comprehensive tests and writing papers to prove their level of Bible competency, there needs to be progress markers along the way.

To facilitate ministry staff education, there will be scheduled sessions during the year to teach full-time speaking ministry staff. This curriculum will be somewhat similar to the *AIM* program used by Douglas Jacoby (see

www.douglasjacoby.com). Ministry centers should budget to occasionally send their teacher to onsite Bible teaching in the Bible lands (Israel, Turkey, Greece, Italy or Egypt). These trips can be accomplished through the International Teacher's Seminar. Similarly, every evangelist should make at least one such trip every ten years. Seeing Israel up close is like adding a fifth Gospel to our understanding. And visiting key sites in Greece or Turkey makes the writings of Paul come alive in 3-D. This approach at educating our ministers will enliven God's word whenever they preach and teach the saints.

Congregational Equipping

At the initiation of the elders and the evangelists, or the call of alarm by the core teachers, material for dissemination will be developed and prepared by the teachers and then presented to the elders and evangelists for review. Besides standard Bible teaching, contemporary issues would be addressed like the following: The cultural affects of modernism and postmodernism, the role of women in the church, the Christian response to violence, the Bible and sexual sins and church discipline. With the heavy load the elders bear as shepherds, and the hard work the evangelist have in administering the Word in evangelism and discipling, there needs to be the safeguard of the teaching ministry.

Those who serve in teaching roles can help the entire congregation. Prayerfully, the various teachers, under the direction of the core teachers, will be able to strengthen each ministry center, help educate the staff and address the occasional winds and waves that affect all of us as Christians.

Steve Staten