

RBCPC Vision Task Force

Report to Session November 10, 2008

Purpose

The task force was formed in response to two compelling factors: Events surrounding the proposed second campus and the implications of rapidly changing conditions impacting the American church. In light of these two factors, the task force was charged with articulating a vision for our congregation that would guide decisions related to (1) Porch property and finances and (2) our focus for the future.

Background

In the spring of 2002, RBCPC completed the construction of the enlarged sanctuary and second floor of the administration building. As part of that construction program, the congregation purchased a second piece of property on Pomerado Road. From 2004 through 2007, a Second Campus Task Force met monthly with an architect and land development specialists to lay the plans for building a second campus, called "The Porch." The vision of that campus was that it be a community center where half of those involved in activities would not be active members of our church but rather from the broader community. In order to accomplish outreach for Christ's love to neighbors, we focused on five ministries that could help us connect with our neighbors: pre-school, recreation, after-school music and arts, café/fellowship, and worship.

In the spring of 2007, we learned that the Poway City Council would not approve our plans for a second campus in that location. Congregational leadership (elders and staff) spent the next nine months in prayer, leading to a vote by Session in December of 2007 that we consider that property an asset to support future outreach opportunities. In January 2008, Session created a new task force with the above stated purpose.

Vision Task Force Processes and Perspectives

The task force immediately recruited several former elders to assist those currently on Session in order to ensure greater diversity of background, experience and opinion. One of the first actions was to resolve that its fundamental role was to free itself from some traditional ways of thinking so as to examine options with an open mind. To that end, the group read books and articles, interviewed local missionaries, and discussed new emerging models of American Christianity.

Discussions were lively, honest and challenging. While opinions differed, themes and consensus emerged. Primarily, members came to agreement that many of the conditions that created the foundation of our current model of church were changing dramatically and would have far-reaching implications for the future of our congregation. The group

came to believe that these implications required a level of openness to new ideas that would be unprecedented.

Conclusions

1. We affirm that the current Purpose and Vision statements of the church are right to focus on the transformational nature of encounters with Jesus Christ. We believe these statements should shape any next steps.
2. God has blessed our church with incredible programs and ministries as well as an extraordinarily gifted congregation. We feel that we are already being effective in reaching and ministering to the many people that we currently appeal to. These ministries should be celebrated and continued. Any direction forward should not radically alter these programs. We do not want to do anything that would detract or threaten our existing ministry.
3. We recognize that while the door has closed on an outreach project like the Porch as a second campus, we must continue forward with the central notion of being a transformational blessing to our community. We want to build trusting relationships and bring down walls that separate us.
4. We recognize a responsibility to utilize funds donated for the original outreach project to be used in a manner that is consistent with an outward, missional, relational thrust.

Recommendations

1. At this time, we do not sense the Lord's leading for a single major proposal or a second campus that would use the entire Porch fund. We strongly oppose the funds from the Porch fund be used to help meet existing, and/or future budget shortfalls. Instead, funds should be used to birth new outreaches, ministries, communities of faith or social services that address a community need.
2. We envision a process that helps individuals in our church learn how to grow in Christ and to discern how God is calling them to live out their faith. Some of these people will be called to begin new and innovative ways of blessing the community that are generally consistent with the values listed below. It is our intent that many of these new efforts will include a way to help currently unchurched friends encounter and grow to maturity in Christ.
3. We recommend a new team be formed to develop the processes and supportive structures to sustain an incubator of new outreaches. They would also develop the philosophy and criteria for funding. This team would consist of some current members of Session, some RBCPC staff, and some active members of the congregation.

4. Where possible we hope to see ministry plans that are eventually self-sustaining financially. Funds could be used for startup costs, then eventually repaid, or perhaps paid forward.

Vision Values

We acknowledge that we are living in a radically different world that is changing at an unprecedented pace. We believe that this requires a different approach to reach those who do not respond to existing efforts to share the good news. Central components of this approach include postures that are:

1. ***Missional vs. Attractional.*** We propose that we must augment our emphasis of attracting people to our existing campus through our programs and services with a renewed focus on equipping people to be on God's "mission". Without hindering existing ministry, we desire disciples of this church body to discover and invest in God's work beyond the boundaries of our property.
2. ***Relational vs. Programmatic.*** This is an intentional shift from relying on a *program* to *tell* people about the gospel to helping church members *live out* the gospel *in the midst* of others. Building authentic relationships with people searching for and far from God is the core of this outreach as we move forward.
3. ***Discipleship vs. Education.*** We believe a "vibrant relationship with Jesus" transforms our lives to look more like Jesus'. Therefore, a key to the effectiveness of our outreach is directly related to how vibrant our relationship with Jesus really is. We must continue to grow beyond knowledge acquisition (which transforms the mind) as the primary mode of spiritual growth and training. Our discipleship must move toward being transformational in all areas of our lives (a holistic faith integrating body, mind, and spirit; all fully aligned toward growing in Christ).
4. ***Innovative vs. Conventional.*** Historically, RBCPC has been very successful in recognizing and addressing challenges to ministry effectiveness. We believe there is a new opportunity, given the changing culture in which we live, to once again unleash the creativity latent within our church to successfully pioneer new ways of reaching those far from God. We hope this outreach effort becomes an incubator of fresh, new ideas that will grow new life in God's kingdom for generations to come.

Clarifying Examples

The following are brainstorming ideas and not intended to launch, change, or alter any existing ministry, nor do they specifically imply direction. This collection of ideas is merely intended to give a glimpse of what could be should the Lord so lead.

1. The RBCPC preschool decides that it has the capacity and desire to expand operations to a second location. This allows it to leverage its experience and expertise to provide services to a broader audience. As research is conducted for a second site,

leaders discover that there is an opportunity to come alongside a ministry to the homeless women and children in Escondido. A partnership is formed where a preschool is established that caters to a paying clientele. The preschool cares for and educates the children of single mothers during the day, allowing these women to finish a degree or vocational school. Proceeds from the preschool along with donations fund affordable housing for these families. Vision House in Seattle, WA is an example. <http://www.vision-house.org>.

2. A group of young adults at the church grow increasingly convinced of the need for developing intentional communities. These communities of faith are committed to the spiritual formation of participants, and are equally committed to incarnating the gospel to their generation. They host backyard concerts, community art shows, forums on social justice issues and promote sustainable living; all of which is the language of their generation. Business entrepreneurs from our church come alongside to advise how to generate income to sustain this movement of faith communities. Funding could be released as seed money for events or to help secure facilities.
3. The Helping Hands ministry discovers that they can have a greater impact by teaching classes on basic home repairs to church members. Participating church members develop confidence in doing their own basic repairs resulting in happy spouses. Trained church members are encouraged to offer their assistance to neighbors. More experienced handypeople from church are available for consultations and referrals. Soon, entire neighborhoods are canvassed, uncovering people in need. Funding could be applied for training seminars, supplies, and (if necessary) liability insurance.
4. A group of fiscally savvy members at church recognize the need to provide assistance to families caught in difficult financial situations. They create a business/ministry that teaches classes in budgeting, debt management, and basic investing. The classes are taught at the church, at local community colleges, and at public libraries. Additional services are provided on a sliding fee structure based on ability to pay. Funds could go toward startup costs, with a schedule for repayment.

Note: It is important to point out that the central thrust of our recommendations do not require the development of a program, but encourage people to serve out of their gifting and passions, whatever their calling. There are many people in our church today who are already living “missionally” and “relationally.” We need to champion our friends among us and learn from them. We have members who are serving on Community Planning Boards as advocates for more parks, affordable housing, and less traffic. We have people serving in our community’s youth athletic clubs as registrars and coaches and in the process blessing hundreds of families. Many others own and conduct business in our community and are shining lights for Christ. No budget is required, but a culture needs to exist within our church that encourages, challenges, and stimulates people to grow as disciples of Jesus beyond our property.

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