

## “Vision Venture 3.0”

**Idea:** Jesus has called us to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations.

**Intro:** Vision – “the faculty or state of being able to see.” How important is vision?

One of the first things I do each morning is put contacts in my eyes. Without them, my vision is dull and blurry. But with them, my vision is crisp and clear. Vision ensures that my day has the propensity to be productive. It does not guarantee productivity, but vision does pave the way for it.

*18 Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law. – Prov 29:18*

**Inquiry:** The Hebrew term translated “prophetic vision” in the ESV is used some 31 times in the OT and denotes that which is communicated by God to man through prophetic preaching.

As the salt of the earth, God’s people are expected to arrest corruption, and as the light of the world they are commanded to dispel darkness. In the absence of prophetic vision, the reverse happens. *People become spiritually defenseless.* When they turn their eyes from God they become vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. When left defenseless, *people become naturally defiant.* They cease to acknowledge God (Rom 1:28ff), which leads to God giving them over to a debased mind. Then *people become personally destructive.* As they lose faith in divine revelation, they are filled with all kinds of wickedness (Rom 1:29).

Where and when God’s people are prepared to see and heed divine revelation, there is a reversal of the sequence of moral deterioration. The proverb continues, “*but blessed is he who keeps the law.*” Prophetic vision always produces two things: redemptive passion and responsive action. God’s Word is all about redemption. When we grasp and heed the divine Word, it creates within each of us a passion over our own redemption and a passion to see others redeemed. The passion leads to our action. Thus, vision begets venture.

“The Christians who have turned the world upside down for God have been men and women with a vision in their hearts, and the Bible in their hands.” – T.B. Matson

Unfortunately, even when the vision has been clearly articulated and received, there are some who choose to dispel it for something they think to be easier or better. We see this happen often throughout the history of Israel. The most outrageous depictions of this are found in the exodus and the wanderings in the wilderness. Time and time again the Israelites chose to not believe God in the face of undeniable miracles. They even went so far as to declare that they wanted to go back to Egypt rather than wander in the wilderness (Num 14:3).

Why would a free people ever want to go back into bondage? How can a group of people who had seen God do such extraordinary and miraculous things not believe that He could and would sustain them in the wilderness? What would cause this people who had seen the mightiest army on the face of the earth defeated in the Red Sea to not believe that God could and would defeat the peoples living in the Promised Land?

The answer is the same thing that prevents us from attempting great things today. The answer is fear...fear of the unknown.

Rather than staking their lives on what God had said would happen, Israel feared what could happen. Fear of the unknown is always a danger to us. Fear keeps us satisfied with the status quo.

Illust: There was an interesting Porsche ad in the *Wall Street Journal Magazine* last month that illustrates this.

“Either you drive disruption or you’re outpaced by it. The status quo dies hard. After all, it has one of the most powerful forces on the planet as its ally...Fear.

Enemy of change, stealer of ambition, fear is the champion of the half-measure, the checked swing, the almost-there. It softens the hard stance, rounds the sharp edge, and dulls the shine of a new idea.

None of us can pretend to be fearless. But every day we have the chance to decide how much influence our fears deserve. Sixty-nine years ago we decided we wouldn’t fear what the world had to say about our cars. Instead of cowering behind research numbers, seeking the most pedestrian design, or worrying about countering conventional wisdom, we would simply make the cars we wanted.

Correction: We would make the cars we desired. Dreamed of, actually.

So ever since that first Porsche, the 356 roadster, our market research has been our own heart rates. Fast, good. Slow, bad. We figure if something excites us tremendously, there’ll be enough people on the planet to make a business of it. If not, then not.

It’s a liberating thing, this leaving of fear on the side of the road. And the funny thing about it is that Porsche cars are more revered, more awarded, and more victorious in competition precisely because we didn’t caution our way and temper our enthusiasm.

A car of any form should never be a compromise, a settling for something less than spine-tingling. If you agree, consider getting behind the wheel of the new Panamera. It’s not the most expected path you could take. But a little disruption can be a good thing, as long as you’re the one doing the disrupting. Courage changes everything.”

Some of you have given in to your fears. You are anxious because our church is in transition. You wish that we would go back to the golden days. Let me help all of us out this morning. A healthy and vibrant church is always in a state of transition because people, culture, and life itself

are always in transition. We can either choose to drive the disruption around us or be outpaced by it.

Over the past year, we have worked to articulate God's vision for RLBC.

#### Things We Know:

- God has called us to declare His glory. (Ps 96:1-8)
- God has called us to make disciples of our neighbors and the nations. (Matt 28:18-20)
- God has called us to proclaim the Word of God. (2 Tim 4:1-2)
- God has called us to reflect His love and unity through biblical community. (Eph 2:19-22)

What does this look like at Red Lane?

- Worship is going to be blended.  
Our desire is to progressively learn new ways to worship Christ. We want to sing a new song (Ps 96:1). We want to engage the hearts of men, women, boys, and girls in our worship settings. This is why the vast majority of what we sing is congregational singing rather than "specials." We want to engage the heart of God in our worship settings. We're going to celebrate God and proclaim His glory. We're going to sing songs that are rich in theology because it enriches our faith rather than our feelings. To some of you our "blended" style of worship will feel like it leans toward a contemporary style. The reason for that is because any new song that we sing is most likely arranged in a contemporary style. Regardless, our desire is to create a worship environment that prepares us for the preaching of the Word and whereby the hearts from every generation can declare God's greatness.
- Preaching is going to be primary.  
The focus of the service is always going to be on the proclamation of the Word (Rom 10:17). We want our members and regular attenders to be built up in the Word of God. Again the focus is on your faith rather than your feelings.
- Missions is going to be our passion.  
Missions is built into our DNA. God has called out two families from this church in the last few years to serve on the mission field. Our desire is for every covenant member to go on a short-term mission trip in the next five years. We want to expand our missions' footprint around the globe as we seek to reach UUPGs. We want to reach the internationals that God has brought to our doorstep in Richmond. We want to create ways to go to the people in Powhatan rather than expecting them to come to us (backyard Bible clubs, off-campus small groups).

God has opened a door for us to engage UUPG's in Barcelona, Spain. Steve and I had the privilege of going there last fall. The Catalonia region of Spain has a population of 7.5 million people. The vast majority of the people live in greater Barcelona. Of those 7.5 million people only 25,000 are evangelicals. That means that .33% are genuine followers of Christ. Among the 7.5 million people there are an estimated 500,000 North Africans, who are largely from the Islamic nations of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and

Libya. It is very difficult for us to go to these nations and engage them, but we can easily go to Barcelona and engage them with the gospel. In the face of such enormous lostness, there is no doubt in mind about us going there. We must go there! We must engage these people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will be partnering with a handful of other SBCV churches and with IMB personnel to engage North African Muslims as well as to encourage and equip the Catalanian Baptist churches. In July we will be sending a team to Barcelona that will use basketball camps as a bridge to engage these peoples with the gospel.

- Discipleship is going to be our identity.  
The command of the Great Commission is to make disciples. As we discovered last summer, discipleship is the goal of biblical community. God has called us to make disciples, and this means evangelizing unbelievers, welcoming them into His kingdom, and then discipling them to grow closer to the perfect example set forth by the Son.

Discipleship fosters both spiritual and evangelistic growth. Therefore, every believer should be able to answer two questions:

“Who am I discipling?” and “Who is discipling me?”

Every one of you should be an active member of a small group. You should also be actively involved in a smaller group of 3-5 believers. For it is in these discipleship groups that you will develop deeper relationships and thus grow deeper in your faith.

- Growth is going to be expected.  
As we intentionally engage people with the gospel in our community, and as we intentionally seek to develop disciples of Christ, we will not continue to be that little country church in Powhatan. We’re going to grow spiritually and numerically. Professions of faith and baptisms will be something we expect to happen rather than something we hope will happen. Our numbers will increase.

Even still, there are typically two dominant perspectives of the church present in any local church. The first perspective views the church as a social club. Those who hold this view would likely never refer to it as a social club, yet their desire to be entertained, to network with others, and to *feel good* while present say otherwise. The second perspective views the church as a spiritual movement. Their emphasis is not on entertainment but on evangelism. They take the teaching of the Bible seriously, seeking to apply all of it to their lives. They understand that the church is not so much about them as it is about God and others.

In Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8, we find our marching orders as a local church. It’s how we flesh out worship, preaching, and mission. Jesus has called us to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations. That vision will require us to constantly evaluate our methods and to be ready to tweak them. It will require us to get out of our comfort zones, to climb out of our ruts, and to be willing to do something fresh and new for the Kingdom. It will require a vision of what can and should be.

A vision is a mental image of what the future will or could be like. A compelling vision includes 4 components:

- The Problem
- The Solution
- The reason something must be done.
- The reason something must be done *now*.

What is the problem?

There are nearly 30,000 people living in Powhatan. I know of 33 churches in the county. If every church averaged 500 every Sunday, 50% of the population would still be unchurched. Our county is vastly lost and unchurched. They are dead in their sins and trespasses. They are cut off from Christ and in darkness. They are headed for a devil's hell. Our nation is lost, and our world is lost.

What is the solution?

We have the light of the gospel. We are Christ's witnesses in this dark, sinful world. Jesus has called, commissioned, and empowered us to go to those lost in their sin with the gospel. We are the solution. Our church is the solution.

Why does something need to be done?

We must do something because Jesus told us to go and make disciples. We do something because He said too. We also must do something because they are in their sin. There is no way for their situation to be improved. They are dead. If we don't go or do something, who will?

Why does something need to be done now?

Time is of the essence. It is running out. Every day that passes is a day closer to the return of Christ. Every day that passes is a day closer to the moment that a person enters eternity. The Great Commission calls us to be urgent with the gospel.

As we seek to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations, what can we expect over the next 5 years?

- Year 1 (2017)
  - Preschool & Children's Ministry Area Renovation
    - New & fresh theme
    - Upgraded technology in the rooms
    - New flooring and furnishings
    - Signage
    - Secure check-in
  - Worship Ministry & Sunday Morning Experience Stabilized
    - Worship pastor called
      - Worship team relaunched
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Easter Festival
    - Moving to the fair grounds
  - First Barcelona Mission Team Sent
    - July 13-22

- Expansion of Fall Festival
  - Move to an off-campus venue
  - Use Disaster Relief feeding trailer
- Parking Lot Resurfacing
  - Address sinkholes
  - Resurface/restripe parking spots
  - Add drop off area for children's area
  - New signage
- Year 2 (2018)
  - All senior adult small groups to be moved to the main level floor
  - Construction of new church office suite
  - Plans developed for worship center renovation
  - 1-2 mission teams sent to Barcelona
  - Off-campus small groups launched
  - Servant-evangelism projects conducted around the county
- Year 3 (2019)
  - Worship center renovation completed.
  - 1-3 mission teams sent to Barcelona
  - Servant-evangelism projects expanded
- Year 4 (2020)
  - Planning begins for the launch of second campus
  - New church is planted in North America
  - 1-3 mission teams sent to Barcelona
  - Undeveloped land behind pavilion is developed into rec fields to better serve the community.
- Year 5 (2021)
  - Second campus is launched.
  - 1-3 mission teams sent to Barcelona.
  - 1-3 mission teams are sent to church plant.

**Conclusion:** “The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon. We are never tired so long as we can see far enough.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

This is the vision for Red Lane. Jesus has called us to be a church that intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations. Will you go with me? Will you work alongside me? Will you sacrifice with me? Will you be willing to do something new with me? Will you partner with me as we seek to drive disruption? Will you intentionally, strategically, creatively, and urgently join me in taking the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations?