

Jan 8, 2017 - Message Notes - Pastor Brian Bell

A Decade of Clarity - Continued!

Today I'd like to do a mid decade review with you as a vision cast for our church and our future. In 2012 I introduced a framework for looking ahead for TRFMC and I called it a Decade of Clarity. - It was of course a 10 year window. It's now 5 years in and I want to take a look back and a look forward as we begin 2017.

Here is the graphic that I used in 2012.

I suggested we use the following 4 words to describe the ministry looking ahead.

Vision

Values

Vocab

Vehicle

So let's review beginning with vision.

Vision - Several years ago a group of people did some excellent work to craft a vision statement. Many times churches create these kinds of statements and then set them aside no intentionally but unintentionally. Often too we have confusion between a vision statement and a mission statement. Trulls has both and most of us here may need some prompting to state either of them.

Let me help.

Our mission statement is a short one:

To share God's love and bring him glory.

Our vision statement is the longer one - which has some very key elements. Would you read it with me please?

In Christ, we will build healthy relationships in our church family and community, meet needs, share Christ and equip everyone to fulfil God's purpose.

This is a strong vision statement - if we do these things effectively we will be a very healthy church. I am so thankful to see the progress Trulls has made in these past 6 years - God has been very faithful - these things are happening in greater and greater measure. Do I hear a hearty Amen?

Next is the idea of values:

Here's where I have been deeply influenced in the past 4 yrs in particular.

My heart as you will know is for the church to be an authentic biblical community. In 2012 I read this statement and it really struck me.

If you make disciples you always get the church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples.

What if it's true I asked? What if I as a church leader have been trying to make a church as priority # 1 instead of making disciples as priority # 1? There is a difference and I began to lead Trulls intentionally towards this shift in our thinking and in our direction.

If we make every effort to make disciples - as Jesus asked of us - surely the church will blossom and grow in depth - not just in numbers.

Then I was introduced to a ministry that suggests Jesus had 3 dimensions to his life - they simply called these 3 dimensions:

Up
In
Out.

That's where the name "3DM" comes from - meaning 3 dimensional ministry. Jesus focused his life around these 3 relationships. If you are interested in learning more about 3DM I would recommend you read this book, "Building a Discipling Culture" by Mike Breen. We have copies available in our Library or you can buy your own copy at the Welcome Centre.

Up - his relationship with his Father, In - his relationship with his chosen disciples, and Out - his relationship to a hurting world. Look at how Jesus operated - he spent time along with his Father - getting away to pray and focus on what God wanted him to do.

He then took 12 men and we also believe there were some key women involved as well and he poured his life into this group of people. They were called disciples which literally means "learners."

Thirdly, we see from the gospels that Jesus was clearly committed to meeting people's needs - teaching them how to live and to love, encouraging them and healing their brokenness.

Jesus moved between those rhythms constantly - showing us how to be like him and act like him. You've heard me describe this as God, shaping our character and developing our competencies.

These kinds of values inform our action and I hope that you will give some further consideration to the significance of these two ideas.

This leads us to ask - how are disciples made? There is where Vocab(ulary) comes into play because language creates culture. If we want to change the way we do church then we will need some common understandings.

Every group or movement does this - they create a set of words - or another way to say it, they create a brand. It's NFL playoffs - and sports teams always have a code and way of playing that they learn together. Politics - we could say there is a whole dictionary used by politicians with key phrases and words.

Think of the cultural impact that companies have like Disney, Nike, Google, Apple, Coca Cola. The image of mickey mouse ears lends itself to knowing a whole lot about Walt Disney and Disney World.

3DM figured this out and began several years ago creating a language around discipling. It expresses simple ways to describe how to be like Jesus.

We've been introducing these in groups called Huddles at Trulls. A huddle is a discipleship and leadership vehicle. The huddle experience nurtures you to live out the 8 principles or ways in which Jesus lived his life and disciplined. And I have to say - out of all the discipleship materials I have seen as a pastor - out of all the initiatives to help churches disciple people, this approach is one of the best.

So here are the 8 ways to follow Jesus and live out your life as a disciple. Let me show them to you.

Each of these shapes set the stage for followers of Jesus to learn the same principles that Jesus used to disciple. I won't take the time to describe them all here - but to note the first one - the triangle - which we should all recognize - it represents 3DM - UP IN and OUT.

In order to build a discipling culture at Trulls we need a common vocabulary around what we believe God is asking of us.

Finally, the last key word is Vehicle and I pluralized it in 2012 as Vehicles. I identified three vehicles for ministry as we headed into the Decade of Clarity that I thought needed our attention. Let's look briefly at each one.

First - Facilities. This picture says so much. Think about it that we started to do the expansion the first week of June 2014 and completed the 10,000 addition and moved in on March 29, 2015. Project Caleb was complete. What a time that was. Hundreds of hours of volunteer work, lots of willingness to adjust and incredible generosity. Look at this - since Oct 6 2013 until last Sunday you have seen \$1,259,136.35. given to support this expansion.

Do I hear a hearty Praise the Lord?

Here's a few scenes to celebrate our new and renewed space.

Up - the Sanctuary receives constant appreciation for it's warmness and inviting nature for worship.

In - we have an amazing kitchen to serve each other with and others. By the way do plan to hang around next Sunday for some soup and conversation - we could even call it Souper Bowl Sunday.

Here's Caleb's Cafe - a great space to connect with one another.

I want you to see this shot - we simply moved a bunch of chairs here in the Sanctuary and created a space for our children's program to host a drum workshop which was a great success.

And what a great scene it was on Dec 9 & 10 in our new gym where we set up the Bethlehem village for Christmas in Courtice.

I humbly submit to you that Trulls was well positioned to expand the facilities as a way to enhance our ministry effectiveness and it will now benefit from us for years to come.

Another vehicle was Strategies. I felt like we need to take some strategic steps and I have a few to point to which we have done or are in the process of doing.

Up - a priority in my mind was to add a Pastor of Worship Arts and Younger Generations.- That happened in March of 2015 when Pastor Jon joined us.

In - In late 2015 we decided to sign up for a Learning Community with 3DM. I knew we'd need more coaching around building a discipling culture and help in applying it to our context here at Trulls. It has been somewhat under the surface so far but there are some really foundational pieces coming together as a result of our being a part of the this experience. Our L C team is doing fabulous work - the team is made up of Bonnie Lee, Mary Ann Muizelaar, Liz Braiser, Donna Short, Pastor Joan , Christian Leroux, Pastor Jon and myself.

We've talked about huddles today already and in the last 3 years we have started 7 huddles. They are vital to training leaders in discipling. Our last LC weekend in November was focused on Missional Communities - and I envision more of these launching in 2017 and 2018.

Our OUT strategies have gained traction in the past while.

We knew we needed more emphasis on connecting with our surrounding communities and we're slowly building this dimension aren't we. Consider our Mops ministry, Basketball, Pickleball and Christmas in Courtice.

The last particular vehicle I want to review today is our staff. This is where it gets a little challenging. We have been blessed with an absolute incredibly strong church staff. Pastor Joan, Pastor Jon, Debi, Carley and Josh, and although they work as independent contractors - I wish to acknowledge Louise Gowdy as our bookkeeper and John Muxworthy as our janitor. All these 7 people are so dedicated in what they do. Do I hear a hearty Hallelujah?

And's then there's me?

I've been sensing for some time now a change is in the air - I'll explain more in a few minutes. I'd like to call Vicky Sneep our Official Board Chair to share a letter from our Bishop Keith Elford.

January 6, 2017

The Official Board and Congregation
Trulls Road Free Methodist Church
2301 Trulls Road S.
Courtice, ON L1E 2N2

Dear Friends in Christ:

Warm greetings to all of you in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I am writing to inform you that I have granted the request of Rev. Brian Bell to be released from his appointment as Lead Pastor at Trulls Road FM Church effective June 30, 2017 in order to transition into retirement.

This means that Trulls Road FM Church is now officially "in transition" and will need to begin the process of discovering what the Lord's future plan is for the church. Rev. Marc McAlister, Director of Church Health for The Free Methodist Church in Canada, stands ready to work with you during this time of transition to help you understand and work through the process of preparing for your next lead pastor. He will be in touch with your leaders.

Over the next few months, I trust that you will join with me in offering your best wishes to Pastor Brian and Lori and pray God's blessings upon them as they continue on the journey of walking with Jesus and living out His plan for their lives.

Very sincerely in Christ,



Keith A. Elford
Bishop

KE17006

Cc: Rev. Marc McAlister, Director of Church Health
Personnel Department

Comments on behalf of the Official Board following the reading of Bishop Keith's letter by Board Chair, Vicky Sneep.

I recognize that this news comes as a big surprise for most of you here today and I also realize that it will take time to process an announcement of such magnitude.

Pastor Brian advised the Board in the summer that he was planning to alter his retirement plans. For the past several months the Board has processed various retirement options with Pastor Brian. Ultimately, he and Lori decided on the plan presented today in the Bishop's letter. The Board is in full support of their decision.

In preparation for this transition phase, Liz Brasier, Vice Chair of the Board, and I have already met with Rev. Mark McAlister. For the past month, the Board has been prayerfully considering names for the Pastoral Search Team. We hope to confirm our recommendations for this team later this week. After these people have been contacted, we plan to report back to you with an update.

Pastor Brian will continue to lead us during this transition period for the next six months. We trust you will join with the Official Board as we uphold Pastor Brian and Lori in prayer and offer support and encouragement to them during their transition to retirement.

Thank you

Vicky Sneep

TRFMC Board Chair

Pastor Brian: Let me give you some more background to my decision.

In 2015 I asked the Board if I could move to a 4 day work week. I knew then this was the beginning of my party to concluding my role as Lead Pastor at Trulls. I didn't know when but I and the Board realized it was on the horizon.

I have 4 main reasons for the timing to be this year to retire instead of when I turn 65. That would be in three years.

1st: Quality of Life for the Future:

I need to tell a bit more about my health concerns. Every week - someone asks me how I am feeling. I usually always say I'm doing good - and it's true I generally feel good.

You know about my kidney condition - next week I go to see the specialist in Toronto and I expect he will say I'm doing well after my Oct surgery and that the prognosis of kidney failure is quite low.

That I believe is a reflection of your loving and prayerful support.

However, as I look at the next decade of my life I am not unaware that his condition could worsen. But that is not the only health factor. Many of you know I had a heart attack in 2009. The heart is doing well except that heart attacks do damage heart muscle and the heart and the kidney work in a cooperative way.

Additionally I finally admitted last year that I am also affected by something called Seasonal Affective Disorder. You likely didn't recognize it in me - but at times- usually fall and winter - I would face times of being down & depressed. I started taking some medication to help with this last year and it is effective I can tell that.

Given my propensity to working and my inclination towards carrying a high degree of responsibility for my duties in the context of a Lead Pastoral position, I have felt I am placing myself in a potential danger zone for further health related stressors.

Passing the Mantle of Leadership:

The next important factor in my reasoning is that I want to pass the mantle of leadership to a younger generation. It's not that I am old now and it's not that I feel all older people should automatically step aside but I am sensing the church needs younger leadership in today's culture and climate.

I don't know about you but I have a hard time keep up with the changes in our society and I believe there's benefit to passing the baton of leadership to those coming up with gifts and abilities to relate that I may not have.

My 3rd reason is very practical. Budgetary Challenges:

As I look carefully at our future as a church I am not convinced we can carry as many staff as we currently have.

I led the way in wanting to add the P of Worship Arts 2 yrs ago. We have been blessed with a \$40,000 gift over three years from a generous donor from beyond our congregation to help us add this position.

Given our recent trend in giving to our operating budget we need to consider not only the number of staff but the priorities for what positions we fill.

The Board knows of my perspective and I offer it to you generally here today knowing that as I conclude my voice at the table must decrease and I am releasing these decisions to others.

I believe it is an option to use this time in the life of TR to adjust the staff configuration due in part to my stepping aside to include a FT youth pastoral role.

We need not go into details here an edit may not be the way forward that the Lord directs Trulls towards - but at least the church can consider it.

As I looked at the Staff I knew that I was coming to the conclusion of my pastoral career so it only make sense to me that I make room for other possibilities.

Personal Opportunities:

Finally I will say I am looking forward to being in a new season of life where other possibilities can be explored. There are some ideas floating around in my head about ways to serve in God's great kingdom work. I am sure I'll be able to articulate those as they become clearer.

My calling is first and foremost to follow Jesus - I've been very blessed for the past 23 years to serve as a full time pastor on a vocational basis.

That leads me on behalf of Lori and I to express our deep appreciation for you as a congregation. Words simply cannot express how rich a blessing you have been to us. We went to Africa in Sept of 2010 after a particularly stressful time in ministry. We had no clue about what was in store after our assignment in Malawi.

We were contacted while there by Trulls and we even had to look up Courtice to see where it was and how to pronounce it.

You have been so receptive and encouraging to us and we are very grateful.

I want to acknowledge that we did talk with you about being here for 10 yrs. That was our anticipation - but now we're sensing that timeline needs to be adjusted.

So what will we do?

We have no plans at this time to re-locate - we will be asking the Lord to guide our steps but for now we will be living in Oshawa.

My purpose in giving you nearly 6 months notice was believing that along with God's leading we would hope that a new Lead Pastor will be appointed by this summer.

Lori and I believe Trulls is poised to grow and be an authentic biblical community of significant proportions going forward.

I close today with a reference to the Vs for the Year which I felt directed towards this year. Ps 121:8.

Would you read it with me please right now?

The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Ps 121:8

You see - pastors come and go - so Lori and I sense this verse speaks to us personally about our coming to you and our going out from you.

Many times over the past 5 years we have said and truly believed - we were here for such a time as this.

God knew we needed to be here at Trulls and God knew Trulls needed us, in particular, to serve as we have.

So we have these next months together not to worry and be discouraged but to celebrate what God has done and will do at Trulls.

This verse also applies to the congregation as well - the Search Process will be covered in prayer - the Lord will be tapping someone on the shoulder for this position - of that I am absolutely sure.

The verse even reflects the pattern of our Lord as he came together with his disciples and then wen on to leave them with his the great commission to go and make disciples.

We'll have lots of time to connect over the weeks and months and I encourage you to prayerfully support our church leadership and staff in this time of transition.

I chose this closing song today for many reasons Jesus All for Jesus - but the most important one is to simply say TRFMC exists under the leadership of Jesus and it's for him and God's glory we are able to be together in ministry.

I adjust the words slightly to make it about our relationship to the Lord as a body of believers.

Will you join Lori and I in worship as we conclude with this song.