

CASTING OUR VISION STATEMENT

Every church has a vision statement. It may not be written down but most people can quickly recognize it in the way that the church operates. It basically sets the direction for the church to take. A few of the definitions below may help setting some clarity to what we mean.

Vision: Defines the desired or intended future state of the church in terms of its fundamental objective(s) and/or strategic direction. Vision is a long term view, sometimes describing how the organization would like the world in which it operates to be. For example a charity working with the poor might have a vision statement which read "A world without poverty."

Mission: Defines the fundamental purpose of an organization or an enterprise, succinctly describing why it exists and what it does to achieve its Vision. It is sometimes used to set out a 'picture' of the organization in the future. A mission statement provides details of what is done and answers the question: "What do we do?" The Mission Statement of our church is **“Gently Offering Healing, Health and Hope in a Hurting World.”**

Values: Beliefs that are shared among the members of an organization. Values drive an organization's culture and priorities and provide a framework in which decisions are made. For example, *"give a man bread and feed him for a day, but teach him to farm and feed him for life."* These values help set the priorities of where our time, talents and treasures are used.

Strategy: Strategy narrowly defined, means *"the art of the general"* (from Greek *“stratigos”*). A combination of the ends (goals) for which the Church is striving and the means (policies) by which it is seeking to get there.

As a young boy I enjoyed fishing from the bank of the canal. It was often quite easy to see the fish and dangle the bait in front of them until they took the hook. Later I began fishing a more advanced style which demanded that I cast a lure away from the shore. By doing so I was able to experience the joy of tugging with a larger fish. It didn't take long to realize that getting into a boat with a skilled fisherman would bring me to opportunities I could only dream about.

Part of this analogy can be linked to the ongoing vision of this church. There is no such thing as a stagnant vision if we are to fulfill the expectations that God has placed upon all of our lives. The vision of Fountaingate Christian Assembly should never be limited to one individual. It must encompass the skills and desires that we all have been gifted to receive from God.

Our mission statement of *“Gently Offering Healing, Health and Hope in a Hurting World”* has acted like a compass to guide us on our journey to greater things. This should offer us an abundance of opportunities to mature and expand the statement as well as continue to focus in and fine-tune the vision.

Lets think about the emerging changes that our assembly has faced over the past 20 years. We began as what I'll describe as a "*first aid station*." It was here that God saw fit to bring in sheep that were in need of immediate but simple care. As time went on we saw ourselves progress into "*a clinic*" where more skill was needed because the needs grew.

As time advances I expect that we will expand into an environment like that of a hospital. It is during this stage that God will bring in more people with precise skills to meet the growing needs that we will be facing. We could even reach the potential of specializing in particular needs.

How will this happen? Or better still, how has this been happening? This can be answered in several ways. The first is to look at the manner in which our structure has been developing. We begin simply by having a service that focuses upon uplifting and meaningful worship as well as the Biblical preaching of the God's Word. This sets our hearts to receive His guidance.

Another vital potential for care was within our children's ministry as the "Gems for Jewels" began the consistent ministry of teaching life skills that patterned the teaching of the Bible. We have a complete training manual that those interested in improving their teaching abilities can find further skills. My hope is to have interchurch training seminars to enhance the abilities of those from other congregations in C.E. as well as other primary ministries.

Counseling has continued to be an area of development. Our pastor has trained over 50 ministers in this city and area as well as ministers in Toronto to use the Enrich Canada material for premarital and marital training. He has also taken dozens of couples through counseling sessions that have helped to prepare them for marriage and improve their existing marriages.

Other ministries formed as we saw the need to become involved in missions and support ministries in other nations. It also helped us to realized that we need to give out as well as receive.

The development of vital polices has helped to give clear direction in important areas of ministry. These have had to be updated and will continue to be developed as our needs change and flourish.

What began as a simple way of tracking our finances has evolved into a detailed series of papers clearly explaining our income and disbursements using the most updated programming for bookkeeping. This will also continue to go through revisions as our ministries expand.

Specific needs began to arise so other ministries were also added. These included the Senior's Ministry which has reached out to those in Long Term Care Facilities and Nursing Homes. We have grown to a team of care givers who serve those who are shut in. We bring a full service of worship, Bible reading, prayer, poetry, and the preaching of God's Word. This has expanded to include 6 different local facilities.

Our Care and Benevolent Ministry has continued to reach out families during times of grief by conducting funerals as well as preparing and serving lunches for the families. Others who are hospitalized are visited. This team of workers has continued to flourish as the needs grow.

We also have continued to offer many Bible studies that dig deep into God's Word in topics of relevance. A number of these have taken several years to teach. There has been plenty of opportunity for interaction and discussion to help set a solid foundation for those who desire to understand and apply the Word of God to their lives.

Sermons have often been preached in series to help discover the hidden gems that the Holy Spirit has given to us. Both the sermons and Bible studies are now available on our recently updated web site. This will continue to expand as our ministries develop and expand.

Our vision will soon grow to someday see and expansion of ministry for our children, youth and adults. We want to encourage interchurch ministry by both offering and becoming involved in training that will help to develop specific skills (i.e - Christian Education; Youth, Music). We are soon planning to offer Bible School video training for both those who simply wish to audit a course as well as those who desire to work toward a diploma or a degree.

Our library ministry has just begun and we have over 450 categorized books. This has already offered a whole new opportunity for spiritual growth. This will eventually become a rich resource for our Video Bible College training.

I look forward to the day where we teach the principles of music and help many develop in their skill of playing. This will enhance our own music ministry as well as ministry in other churches. Music has a way of also giving an avenue for greater spiritual health.

Social events will always be an important focus. That is why we continue to have annual church picnics as well as Christmas banquets. We will continue to offer a time of refreshment and recognizing of those who have celebrate birthdays and anniversaries each month. This is now expanding to include arranging to attend local concerts and special events.

There is discussion about beginning small groups for men and women that will continue for years. This will help in encouraging healthy relationships to form. It is within the scope of these groups that long lasting friendships occur. Variety will become the "constant" as certain skills, hobbies and similarities bring us together.

The Celebrate Recovery ministry will eventually be used to train a team of people with a concern to help those with addictions find a place of security where they can overcome habits that have controlled their lives. They will be offered an opportunity to build a relationship with someone they trust who will guide them into long lasting achievements to benefit themselves and those they love.

Evangelism is an area that we need to focus upon in order to fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus gave to us. Creativity along with the combination of tried and true principles will help to bring us to a level that is pleasing to God. God may need to bring in people with that gifting to enhance that scope of ministry if we cannot raise up the leaders from within.

Our youth ministry has gone through many changes over the years. We were quite involved in the interchurch Youth ministry (Youth Net and Cornerstone and recently in Firehouse). There is a need that will soon evolve to have our own youth ministry on Sunday as well as through the week. The important key for its success will be the right leadership. Once this begins we want to also become active with other youth groups for special events.

A new direction has recently included the importance of living healthy. We can be and need to be spiritually healthy but we cannot neglect the need to be physically healthy as well. God gave many dietary laws to protect the children of Israel. We can all benefit through carefully selecting the foods we eat and exercising more regularly. I envision the day when we can bring together professionals in their field of expertise who will not only offer good advice but also help to lay out an approach that is specifically designed to match the needs of the individuals.

Part of this plan began with having “*Healthy Eating Classes*” for our community. Hundreds have already been helped by simply allowing our facilities to be used to teach “hands on” approach of preparing healthy meals.

This has also expanded with the establishment of a community garden that will be implemented this year beginning with 1 acre of our land. This will offer our community a place to grow healthy food and get regular exercise. It will also reduce the ongoing cost of feeding those who are less fortunate with wholesome fruit and fresh vegetables. This can eventually grow to include a green house so this type of nutrition can be available year round.

We cannot forget the ministries that often get overlooked. They include the ongoing maintenance and custodial work. There are many repairs and preventive maintenance required to ensure that the property is kept looking good and the water, heating and ventilation system is functioning to its highest potential. We also are thankful for the ongoing cleaning of the building. The grass needs to be cut regularly and the snow removed. This may not seem like part of the vision but just imagine how things would quickly disintegrate if these things were not constantly cared for.

The vision of this church does not end with our specific congregation because it sees the need of being part of a greater vision and that includes that of The Fellowship of Christian Assemblies. Our pastor has been actively involved with this development for over ten years when he was asked to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the FCA. During this time period the number of FCA ministers in Ontario have grown from 70 to 170. We have spent untold hours updating the FCA handbook along with their policies, procedures and forms.

Our pastor has also been a member of the Fellowship Press which is the communication arm of the FCA. He became an elder of the FCA in 2011. This has brought in a further involvement in helping to guide other churches in their formation as well as walking others through difficult resolutions.

A clear vision is also being formulated for the FCA and a fee structure has been implemented. New endeavours for church planting and leadership development training are being formulated. A Policy of Restoration of Ministers was recently implemented. A new web site is being developed in which our pastor is directly involved as a member of the FCA Fellowship Press. A mission's policy will soon be completed.

Our church endorses 34 ministers in Ontario as well as 4 churches. So it clearly shows that our vision goes beyond our local assembly.

I welcome any suggestions to improve this vision statement.

In Christ's Service

Pastor Brad Montsion
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