

Vision Planning Team Report

APRIL 27, 2008



**Report of the Vision Planning Team (VPT)
April 2008**

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Charge: This report is the result of the efforts of a team appointed by the church council in April 2007. Composed of 12 persons selected to be broadly representative of the congregation. The team was charged to *“prepare a plan which will reflect the priority issues that Heritage CRC must address in the next 3-5 years.* The Vision Planning Team wishes to thank the council and the congregation for this opportunity to serve.

B. Vision Planning Team Membership: The VPT was composed of a broad representation of the congregation. Stan Koster acted as our church consultant.

Dirk Vander Wall Chair

Andy Berkenpas

Roger Buist

Tessa Rop

Jim Sytsma

Ken Woltjer

Tara Hendricks Secretary

Brady Mulder

Missy Walters

Tom Wychers

Lois Hecksel

Brenda Landhuis

Ex-officio members and advisors to the VPT, providing insight and assistance were.

Pastor Jim Zinger

Deacon Mark Zuverink

Elder Gregg Dykstra

Elder Pete Tigchelaar

C. Information Sources: The VPT obtained information from several sources:

1. Council and the congregation through an appreciative inquiry survey,
2. Church records and files,
3. Past Studies,
4. Interviews of staff and key ministries,
5. Interviews of recently joined members
6. Percept profile of our community within a four-mile radius of church,
7. Information from the Byron School System.

D. General Approach: In its work the VPT acted as a research and development group for the congregation, gathering information to answer six fundamental questions. In this process the team evaluated present strengths of our church, areas in which improvement should be made, and the opportunities and the challenges that are facing our congregation. These results were presented to members of the council in a January 2008 weekend retreat conducted at Byron Christian Middle School. At the retreat, and subsequent to it, the elements of a vision statement were developed to guide the work of the congregation in the next few years and serves as a framework for recommendations and future action. Throughout the process we have prayed and depended upon God’s leading.

E. Fundamental Questions. The VPT sought to answer the following questions to provide guidance on how the church can continue to be obedient to what God is calling us to do.

1. Why are we here?

The VPT revisited and reaffirmed that the fundamental purpose of the church is summarized in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

And the Great Commandment Matthew 22:37-39:

“Love the lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The VPT also reviewed numerous portions of Scripture regarding more specific purposes of the New Testament Church flowing from the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Church Purpose Areas around which planning is organized.

The result of these discussions was to organize our planning around Rick Warren’s five purposes as outlined in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church*. The vision statement, along with the objectives and goals section of the report is organized in this manner. These five areas of purpose are:

Outreach “...go out and make disciples”

Worship “...they continued to meet together...praising God.”

Fellowship “...all the believers were together and had everything in common...devoted themselves...to fellowship”

Discipleship “...devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.”

Service/ministry “...many wonders...were done...selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone in need.”

2. Who are we?

Every congregation has its own unique ministry, formed by its membership, its gifts and talents, and its time in history. The VPT spent a great deal of time identifying the important identity components of the Heritage congregation.

In reviewing our church information we found a number of areas in which we are strong and areas in which we are challenged. This information is summarized under the section entitled “A Summary Analysis of Heritage Christian Reformed Church and its Community.”

Basic to its work was the development of a set of Core Values, a Mission Statement and a Vision Statement. These are drafts recommended for consideration by council and the congregation. The Vision Statement was organized around the five Biblically based purposes of the New Testament Church. The mission and vision statements are found elsewhere in this report under appropriate headings.

3. Where has God placed us?

The VPT looked at two primary sources for community data:

- A Percept Study of a four-mile radius around the church developed by a nationally recognized demographic research organization used by many churches in our denomination.
- And we obtained some summary data from the Byron School District. This summary material is contained in the appendices.

The overwhelming conclusion is that God has placed us in a community where there is a great deal of opportunity for ministry. 35% of the people within four miles of our church are not actively involved with their faith, with another 31% only somewhat involved. Therefore, the fields are ripe for harvest with 66% of the people immediately surrounding the church indicating that faith is not a strong part of their life experience.

A second general set of findings is that we live in a community that is growing, in which there are a large number of young families with children. All levels of income are represented in the area, but the majority of income levels are middle income with modest numbers on the income extremes. While average income is slightly above national average, there is a very high presence of multiple family incomes and the number of women working is above average. This includes those households with young children. A more extensive summary is provided in the Community Data appendix of the retreat manual.

4. Where do we believe God wants us to go?

This is the question of vision...where we believe God is calling us to go. The VPT developed the vision statement draft in this report based on the work of the participants at the January retreat. The vision statement is organized around the five purposes of outreach, worship, fellowship, discipleship and ministry/service and is designed to be used as a reference document to keep the church focused on what we believe it should become and to monitor progress in the various areas. It is expected that objectives and goals are aligned with what is stated in the vision, so that what we do moves us toward realizing this consistent with our values and with our mission.

5. How will we get there?

Using the information gathered by the team, the VPT and Council drafted elements of the vision statement and goals for each area.

Steps to follow are:

- a. The final report will include a few specific objectives to enhance our ministry, specify assignments and timelines so that there is accountability and council can monitor and support the progress for the agreed-upon priorities.
- b. It is recommended that some members of the VPT, complemented by members of council or others of council's choice, continue as a Strategic Action Leadership Team (SALT) to assist in the implementation of the priority recommendations and any other initiatives which flow from it.
- c. Finally it is recommended that the leadership of the church take time to review progress annually, perhaps by scheduling a retreat time away from their ordinary duties to assess what has been done, what remains and what changes need to be made to the plan based on new information.

6. How will we measure progress?

It is important that periodically the church leadership reflect on the progress we make on the agreed upon priorities. This includes that our focus remains on the mission and that the mission is clearly communicated. We must assure that we provide adequate support and resources. We must also adjust as necessary based on new information or items that have changed since the plan was first put in place.

One of the important ways to measure progress is to have regular dialogue with ministry leaders about their program around some basic questions such as:

- a. What is going well in your ministry area?
- b. What is a challenge in your ministry area?
- c. If you could do everything in your ministry area you believe God is calling you to do, what would it look like?
- d. How is the ministry attempting to carry out the Church's mission and purpose?
- e. What can we do to help you?

It is recommended that each month time be set aside in the pastoral council agenda to interview ministry leaders in one area of church ministry for the purpose of encouraging them, praying with and for them, and discussing how we together can make the ministries most effective around the questions above. This will increase commitment on the part of the leaders, since they will feel supported and encouraged, and it can be an avenue of communication and support for the congregation (if council regularly reports summaries of these discussions). This in turn will broaden and deepen commitment, prayer, personal and financial support, and also provide ways to sustain and strengthen the various ministries.

II. A SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF HERITAGE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH AND ITS COMMUNITY

In reflecting on church and community it is useful to look within the church at its **strengths and weaknesses**, and to look at the community's **opportunities for ministry and the threats to doing ministry** in that community. This is sometimes called S.W.O.T. Analysis and is useful in summarizing some of the major issues.

A. Our Church

Source of church information came from church data including attendance over the past five years, review of church programs, where people live who attend our church, and the results of the congregational Appreciative Inquiry survey. Summaries of this information are contained in the Church data section of the Retreat Manual.

1. **Strengths** - There are a number of strengths which Heritage CRC possesses which can be celebrated and for which we give thanks. They provide a strong base for the future into which God calls us.
 - a. **Music** is consistently identified as a strength and is viewed as one of the most significant expressions of worship. The church has a large number of members with musical talent. The congregation as a whole enjoys and participates in musical expression.

- b. **Volunteers**- Heritage has a significant volume of volunteers and is a caring and compassionate people with a strong desire for service.
- c. **Worship** - We have a vital and compelling worship experience many appreciate.
- d. **Staff** - We have capable and skilled staff.
- e. **Advantageous Location** – We are located in a prospering and growing community.
- f. **Facility** – We have a fine, spacious building that gives us significant flexibility for programs and service.
- g. **Evangelistic Desire** - We have a desire for evangelism and outreach. A majority of those responding to the church survey identify Heritage is best performing its mission when it is Christ in the Community
- h. **Age Representation** - There is a good age distribution ranging from small children through senior citizens. This distribution has remained fairly stable in recent years. This provides strength in experience, in financial resources, in mentoring and in capacity for ministry and future growth.
- i. **Fellowship** - The church characterizes itself as a “family,” caring about and for one another, ranking “fellowship” as a highly held value.
- j. **Talent** - This is a talented congregation with a large number of people with leadership capabilities
- k. **Financial Giving** - Our people and our financial strength and giving provide a strong resource base.
- l. **Youth Programs** - We have strong and vibrant children and youth programs.
- m. **Knowledge** - Members have sound Biblical knowledge with many having benefited from a Christian education and Christian family background.

2. Challenges (Weaknesses) – The retreat group discussed many aspects of church life and developed a listing of some of the challenges we need to recognize and overcome as we move forward.

- a. **Ownership** – We need to realize that “we” are the church, not the building, not the staff, not the council.
- b. **Involvement** – While many are involved, it appears that there is a lack of passion among some of us.
- c. **Lack of Diversity** – We are primarily white, middle class from Christian families and backgrounds.
- d. **Acceptance** – We can be reluctant to accept those of different culture and backgrounds from our own.
- e. **Personal Preferences** – We need to better understand and agree to disagree on personal preferences. We seem at times to be inwardly focused, not acknowledging that preferences are not biblical mandates. We need to better accept that the church and our work is not about us, but about fulfilling the Great Commission and being willing to do whatever it takes to achieve this purpose.
- f. **Differing Expectations** - Sometimes expressed as intolerance of those who do not share our views. While we are loving and caring, we are not always ready to give the necessary freedom to those who want to try something new; nor do we always communicate well so that we understand intent. And at times there is no opportunity to be part of the dialogue in shaping ministry and ways we can be involved.
- g. **Lack of Direction and Purpose** – At least until recently there have been varying views of the purposes, priorities and direction of the church.

- h. **Confident Witnessing** – While we know we should be witnesses, many of us are not confident to do so or do not know how to explain the “Hope” that is within us.
- i. **There is a lack of worship space** – The sanctuary is typically filled to capacity for morning worship. The lack of worship space is likely a limiting factor, or will be a limiting factor to our growth. The sanctuary needed improved lighting and some updating.
- j. **Limited ability to retain young members** – Similar to many churches we do not retain a large portion of the children raised in the church and who initially profess their faith here.
- k. **We do not regularly evaluate church programs to make sure they address present needs.** – There is a need to review programs regularly in light of new information and/or changes in church and community to make sure that activities, events and ministries still support the mission of the congregation.
- l. **We do not document well.** We do not keep strong and clear records or update committee mandates, rosters and job descriptions. It can be difficult, especially for guests and new members, to know how we function.
- m. **There is a lack of organization, administration and coordination** – There is often a lack of knowing who does what and how. Volunteers do things, but there can be inefficiency. A ministries coordinator would be beneficial.
- n. **We are not well known in the Community** – We have involvement in the public schools through Kids Hope, but this is a limited number. Most children do not attend the public schools. While most in the Community may know of us, they do not know who we are and seldom have opportunity to visit our church.
- o. **Lack of Awareness about our gifts** - We are not sure how we can be used. There is strong indication from the appreciative inquiry survey that a number of us do not know our gifts so are unsure of how to be involved.
 - Some do not feel knowledgeable or well-equipped and so are somewhat fearful to take risks.
 - Some Adult educational opportunities are not well attended.
 - We may not feel needed. Perhaps we were never asked or included in the dialogue about our opinion, or encouraged to step out and try.

Summary: Our challenges center on organization, attitude, training and facilities.

1. We are unequipped and perhaps timid about stepping out to try new things.
2. In many ways we like the comfort of the status quo (we may be unwilling or find it difficult to consider or accept change). Planned changes will need to be thoroughly discussed and understood by the broader congregation prior to implementation.
3. There is a lack of organization to promote and adapt ministries as needed. We talked about the need for more definition regarding roles and responsibilities, as well as recognition and rewards for those involved in ministry.
4. There is minimal room for growth in our morning worship due to maximized seating.

B. Our Community

Source of community information: Community information came from two sources.

- From the Percept organization, a national census-based research organization that provides information on various aspects of our community of particular interest to churches.
- From population demographic data from the Byron School district.
- An extended summary of the community demographics is contained in the Community Data section of the retreat manual

Ministry Opportunities - As the team looked at the community a number of issues came to the fore. First the community has changed and is expected to continue to change. There are many more marginally involved with their faith than we might first think. As a church, our lack of involvement in the community and our somewhat closed culture does not make us readily accessible to much of the community.

Because there are many ministry opportunities both within our congregation and in the community; several options should be considered:

1. **Knowing and Using our Gifts** - We need to do some gifts inventory in preparation for mobilizing people for specific ministry opportunities either within the church or in the community.
2. **Intentional Relationships** - We need to encourage people to “work their network.” Everyone knows a number of people who have significant needs. This information should be gathered, programs and events developed to address what has been discovered, and training provided to assist people in inviting these people to participate with us.
3. **Someone in charge** - It would be well for us to consider a staff person to serve as ministries coordinator. This person could help people discover their gifts and keep a record for future reference and use. Also this person would be responsible to assemble a listing of opportunities for ministry and encourage people to get involved. This position could include organizing resource materials so that it is easily accessible.
4. **Welcome and Enfolding** - We need a visitor welcome team. This will utilize gifts of our people and strengthen our welcome and enfolding program.
5. **Small Care Groups** are an important way whereby we can minister to one another and to those who are brought into the fellowship. Because it provides opportunity “to belong,” to build relationships, to learn, it helps sustain the commitment of a “seeker” or new Christian. It also encourages genuine fellowship throughout the congregation. New-comers need to be asked to join with the possibility of mentor families assigned.
6. **20s to 30s Ministry** - There currently is a noticeable decline in the volume of young families. Development of a young married couple’s ministry could be beneficial along with the ministry needs of strengthening marriages and child care for young families. Demographics indicate most young people are delaying marriage as well therefore **A Singles Group Ministry** might be beneficial for this age as well.
7. **Community Concerns** – the Percept demographic study identified the following community concerns and priorities which present us opportunities for service.

- *personal counseling and family counseling,*
- *marriage enrichment,*
- *twelve step, and divorce recovery.*
- *dealing with divorce*
- *achieving fulfilling marriage*
- *parenting skills*
- *dealing with stress*

Potential specific ministries might be:

- Mom’s Group (Moms in Touch)
- Women’s Ministry
- Christian Day Care
- Financial Advice
- Friends Ministry
- Recovery Ministry
- Marriage Enrichment
- Alcoholics Anonymous

III. CORE VALUES

The following is adapted from a source document by Stan Koster on Core Values. Lyle Schaller, a church planner, writes in his book Getting Things Done:

“The most important single element of a corporate, congregational, or denominational culture, however, is the value system.”

Simply stated, what we value will drive our ministries. As Aubrey Malphurs states in his book on Advanced Strategic Planning:

- *Values dictate personal involvement,*
- *Values communicate what is important,*
- *Values embrace good change,*
- *Values influence overall behavior,*
- *Values inspire people to action,*
- *Values enhance credible leadership,*
- *Values contribute to ministry success.*

People are willing to become part of, involved in, and contribute to activities and programs that are consistent with what they value. Ministry success is fundamentally related to what the group corporately values. Because a church needs to change through time, values represent a good framework to determine which new things will “fit here”. Values also help us determine whether proposed change is just uncomfortable (which is always the case with new things), or whether it just does not fit what we have said is of vital importance.

Since values will always drive our ministry, it is important to discover and to embrace the core values of our church. Values are core beliefs on which we will not compromise. Core Values are so vital that we would sooner close the doors than abandon them. Core Values need to possess four basic characteristics:

1. **They are Biblical.** They can be found in the Bible. There are lots of things we do which are not found in the Bible like drums, pianos, organs, facilities, but they are not core values.
2. **They are primary or fundamental.** In this sense they are beliefs, not necessarily subject to empirical evidence.
3. **We are passionate about them;** they permeate the heart and soul of the church.
4. **They are constant,** that is they do not change through time even though our mission and vision, our organization, and our specific programs or activities can and do change.

With this understood the VPT presents the attached Core Values for Heritage. We do not claim to do these things perfectly or to be the only church to profess such values. But these values are what we consider to reflect the value system of Heritage. It is our desire to do them well. These clearly are not the only things we value. However, they represent the most basic common values that we choose to use to build our future upon.

We believe these values accurately reflect Heritage CRC and are Biblical. As such they will be helpful to explain what we are like and what characterizes us. As these are items we value, we desire to improve in our implementation of them.

We have organized these values in an anagram “GLORIFY”. We did this intentionally to enhance the ability to memorize and recall these values. There is no order of importance. All are important.

Core Values will be most useful for future planning purposes. They will help the church be more intentional and efficient. Documented values will be helpful in future decision making.

Core Values – Heritage Christian Reformed Church

We passionately hold to the following Biblical, fundamental and constant values:

G – God honoring worship is the highest purpose and privilege of God’s people. Our goal is to glorify God in ways that draw us together into his presence, celebrate our salvation in Christ, strengthen our faith, and inspire us to serve Him daily.

L – Lives transformed by God’s grace leading to a personal knowledge, relationship, and faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We highly value communication with God through continual prayer. Our goal is for all to become more like Christ in all areas of life.

O – Outreach to our community and our world by providing humble service as we follow the servant leadership of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayer is to assist others to a personal knowledge, relationship and faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

R – Relevant explanation and application of God’s unchanging Biblical truth to our ever-changing contemporary world, equipping people to mature in Christ through prayer, meditation, and continued education.

I - Infallible and Inspired the Word of God presents His truth as the final authority for our life and teaching. The Holy Spirit uses this to transform our lives to become more like Christ.

F – Fellowship: As an authentic community we reach out to others in hospitality and accountability, nurturing and establishing each person with the loving support of a group of devoted followers of Jesus. (Koinonia)

Y – Youth are important members of the church as well as the future of our church. They are gifts from God and important to God. We incorporate youth into God’s kingdom through Christian Education, youth ministries, and a variety of life service experiences.

IV. Mission Statement

A sense of mission is essential for the well-being of a church. In general a mission statement provides a focus to what the church does. It is a short statement of “the business we are in.” A mission statement should be something easily remembered and central to what the church believes is involved in obedience to God. According to A. Malphurs, a noted church planner, mission affects a church in many different ways:

- It sets the ministry’s direction – Where are we going?
- It formulates the ministry’s function – What are we supposed to be doing?
- It informs the church’s future – What should we strive to become?
- It acts as a guideline for decision-making - Which are the important things we should do now?
- It promotes unity - We can agree on what we are to do together.
- It shapes our strategy - How will we get there?
- It helps us evaluate - How are we doing? Are we doing the right things?

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Our study of scripture finds five basic purposes for the church. These are:

- **Worship**
- **Fellowship**
- **Discipleship**
- **Outreach**
- **Service**

We are a Christian body dedicated to each other’s common interests, and a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. We care, support and love each other. We worship Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We subordinate ourselves to Him. We demonstrate our love of Christ by obeying his commands. We strive to become Christ like and grow in the maturity of Christ. We do this not in our own strength, but by the strength of the Holy Spirit. We hold Jesus as the supreme example of the obedient servant.

Philippians 2:1-11 NIV– *If you have an encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like minded, having the same love, being in one spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*

Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on the cross!

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To serve incorporates all of the basic purposes of the church. To serve Him, His People and His World involves: worship, outreach, fellowship, discipleship and of course service/ministry. Service is love in action. It requires commitment, submission, servant hood and deliberate acts. You show love by serving. Service is the required response of the Christian (and corporately the church) to God's love. It fits our Calvinist theology of Sin, Salvation & Service. We uphold Christ as the ultimate model of the humble servant.

Mark 10:45 NIV – *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

This short mission statement of 11 words uses the name of Christ and the pronoun referring to Christ three times. This is deliberate. It underscores a basic belief of Heritage that the church is all about God and not about us. We gather together not to be served, but rather to serve.

We serve Him. Our worship is centered on honoring and glorifying God. We disciple our children, ourselves and our community in response to the great commission **Matthew 28:19** and great Command **Matthew 22:37-39**.

We serve His People. All people are God's people. All persons are created in God's image. **Genesis 1:27 NIV** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* Being created in God's image means in part that each person's soul is eternal just as God is eternal. While God creates and loves all people, not all will be saved. We can provide no greater service to our fellow man than to introduce them to the saving grace of our Lord and Savior. We do this best by serving them and demonstrating Christ's love.

Matthew 25:31-40 - *When the Son of Man (Jesus) comes in his glory, and his angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left.*

Then the King will say to those on his right, come you who are blessed by the Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

We serve His World declares God as the creator. This is typically the most basic reference that all people refer to God. It again reinforces that all people are his people and further more this world is his. We are charged with social justice and environmental stewardship. **Genesis 1:26 NIV** *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*

To serve calls and challenges us to not just know their faith, but to act on it. It brings to mind the concept of putting others first, a concept that can only contribute to a healthy church.

V. VISION

A vision is what we should look like if we have accomplished or are busy with everything we believe God wants of us. It is a picture of the future, and end of ministry before it begins. It states what can and should be and has enough detail to guide the present efforts and planning. According to George Barna Vision is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God.

Our Vision for Heritage is to Serve such an appealing slice of heaven that all who experience it will want more.



We envision this slice of heaven consists of a healthy, balanced diet and exercise of:

- Celebrative Worship
- Compassionate Fellowship
- Comprehensive Outreach
- Compelling Spiritual Growth
- Caring Service

Each component of our life together is bathed in prayer which is the life blood of the church.

Worship

We intend our worship to be Christ centered and God honoring through sincere, diverse, educational, and creative celebration of our intimate relationship with Him. Our worship will magnify God and be centered on his Word. We highly value communication with God through continual prayer where we praise God's name, thank the Lord for his abundant blessing, confess our sin, intercede for others, and pour out the cares of our heart. We celebrate our salvation and listen to God's direction for our lives. Our worship will be inclusive of the old as well as the young, and sensitive to the needs of those new to Christ as well as established Christ centered saints. As God is the creator of all we will be tolerant and accepting of all

sincere means of praise and worship. We will encourage widespread participation in public worship through use of God given skills of music, media, current technology, drama, dance, writing and the arts. Because of God's grace, we daily use our gifts in grateful service to the Lord for the building up of His Kingdom; therefore each day of our lives becomes one of worship and praise to God.

Fellowship

We intend Heritage become an authentic community. We reach out to others in hospitality and accountability, nurturing and establishing each person with the loving support of a group of devoted followers of Jesus. Our dream is to make Heritage an appealing slice of heaven that encourages, supports and sustains all those who attend. To attain this we will worship, pray and play together so that we may warmly know and care for each other. We share God's love to ALL who enter by intentionally welcoming and connecting, providing safe activities to encourage diverse, intergenerational relationships.

Outreach

We intend to reach out to our community and our world by providing humble service as we follow the servant leadership of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will treat our neighbors with honor and respect, and always be prepared and ready to share the hope that is within us. We believe we need to earn from our neighbors the right to be heard by first showing them the love of Christ through sincere care, compassion, comfort and service. We see members living out their faith wherever God has called them; confidently sharing Christ and their own testimonies of what God has done in their lives. Our prayer is to assist others to a personal knowledge, relationship and faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. We highly value lives transformed by God's grace leading to a personal knowledge, relationship, and faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. While only the Holy Spirit can transform a life, we are privileged to be used by the Lord to advance His Kingdom.

Discipleship

We intend Heritage members to be so passionately in love with God that this love shows itself in all aspects of their lives. Our goal is for all Heritage members to become more like Christ. Though God is infinitely greater than us, He wants us to know as much about Him as we can. If we do not know Him, we cannot love Him. If we do not love Him, we will not joyfully serve Him and if we do not serve Him we will never know the wonderful blessing of living in fellowship, with Him and enjoying the riches of His mercy and grace.

We expect members practice discipleship by helping, teaching, leading and mentoring others to a greater knowledge of God as well as being open to the same. Each of us will bring others along on their own faith journey. We provide relevant explanation and application of God's unchanging Biblical truth to our ever-changing contemporary world, in innovative and stimulating opportunities to equip people to mature in Christ through prayer, personal devotions, meditation, and continued education. We see the church as highly involved and influential in the Christian's early development. However, as each member matures in their faith each person also takes on added responsibility for developing their faith. The church always remains influential, but it becomes just as important to provide opportunities to exercise a person's faith as to learn it.

Ministry/Service

We intend all members of Heritage be the body of Christ. Just as Jesus came not to be served, but rather to serve, we see each member as divinely gifted by God for the purpose of advancing God's kingdom. We uphold Jesus as the ultimate example of the humble servant and wish to model our lives after Him. We desire to serve Christ in ways that use the spiritual gifts of all members of God's family. We believe that every member is uniquely gifted and encourage every member to use their time, their talent and their resources to be the "hands and feet" of Jesus. We envision Heritage continually challenging, encouraging and providing opportunities for Christ honoring service to other members as well as our community.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Along the journey of the last year the VPT has accumulated a list of ideas and recommendations that could be implemented to enhance Heritage's faithfulness in becoming all that God's wants us to become. We have been encouraged that numerous ideas have already had full or partial implementation even without the VPT initiating or encouraging. Not the least of these has been a greater spirit of welcoming, increased fellowship opportunities such as the fellowship dinners and progressive dinner, the welcome center and educational opportunities such as the Dave Ramsey series. Such individual initiatives are commended and encouraged. However, we also believe that the church should steadily be pushing ahead with focus. Some of this requires planning and intentional effort. A complete list of ideas and programs will be shared with the congregation and with hopefully a soon to be appointed Strategic Action Leadership Team (SALT). We also understand that attempting to do too much too soon can cause chaos and confusion. Therefore, the VPT and Council have met to jointly develop a priority list of recommendations to act on and implement over the coming 18 months. Our progress will be regularly reviewed to determine what has been blessed and accomplished and what remains. As God blesses we will then add new initiatives to attempt and accomplish. Suggestions from the congregation are always welcome.

Objective #1 - Deepen and broaden the prayer participation of the congregation by increasing understanding of the importance of communicating with our Lord, raising awareness of needs for which prayer is desired.

Goal #1: Council will recruit and appoint several people with a passion for prayer to be a prayer coordinator team to expand our dependence and involvement in prayer, and to lead the congregation into a deeper prayer life. Commitment is to provide training and leadership for this person(s). *Immediately*

Goal #2: Make members more aware of prayer and the prayer line through emphasis in newsletters, prayer bulletins and by distribution of the prayer line number so that members are encouraged to regularly pray and contact this service. *Within a year*

Goal #3: Challenge each organization and small group of the church to reserve significant time at each meeting for prayer for the church and its ministries. *Immediately*

Goal #4: Start new prayer groups and make members aware of existing groups where prayer is a central focus. *Continually*

Responsible party: Council and Prayer Team

Objective #2 - Enhance each individual's personal passion for Christ. We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us leads us to real growth, but in many respects we are as close as God as we chose to become. We desire to foster and enhance personal habits such as prayer, scripture study, quiet time, tithing, journaling etc. which leads to greater love for God.

Goal #1: Pastor Zinger to develop and present a series on Discipleship. This could involve a study guide for members between the sermons. This should involve stories from the Bible of discipleship as well as from the congregation...to bring this alive for people. *Within 6 months*

Goal #2: Find & make available a devotional series on discipleship and personal devotions. Strive for higher member participation in personal devotions. *Within 6 months.*

Goal #3: Pastoral Elders will encourage higher member participation in Bible study groups by at least 10 basis points of congregation. Promote this through emphasis in messages, visits & recruiting and making this a point of emphasis in Adult education, youth groups, small groups and make more groups available. *Within 6 months*

Goal#4: Develop a program of mentoring and accountability by providing training to potential mentors then pairing those making profession of faith or desiring a mentor with mature and gifted members. *In one year*

Responsible party: All Pastors & Pastoral Elders

Objective #3 - Provide Biblically focused God honoring worship experiences that include repentance and confession and are also passionate and celebrative, to lead the congregation to experience God and glorify Him in all aspects.

Goal #1 Continue to regularly center sermons on a specific topic series to allow an expanded understanding of the topic and stimulate community interest and frequent attendance. This will be supplemented with tangible hands on learning tools and study aids.
Continuous

Goal #2 Include creative prayer times in worship to enhance our worship, prayer life and fellowship. A recent example is the Bucket Prayers. *Over next year*

Goal #3 Increase congregational participation in worship through greater use of responsive interactive readings, confessions, etc. *Over next year*

Goal #4 Use the various forms of technology available and the arts to support the worship experience. *Over next 18 months*

Responsible party: Objective Council - Goals Worship Committee and Worship Planning Team

Objective 4 - Develop a gift discovery / ministry opportunity data bank, matching people with needs and opportunities. There is a need to inventory these, to encourage greater participation and support where appropriate and to coordinate efforts where needed.

Begin within the next year

Goal #1: Identify and recruit members with a passion for service to staff a volunteer gifts/service coordinating team to help with gifts discovery and maintenance of files.
Balance of 2008

Goal #2: Identify and implement computer software for cataloging and inventorying member's gifts and interests for service then conduct an actual gifts inventory. *Balance of 2008*

Goal #3: Develop, encourage and promote participation in a Discovering My Gifts / S.H.A.P.E. Course. *By end of 2008*

Responsible party: Administrative council, staff and appointed gifts/service team

Objective #5 - Increase our awareness of various ministry opportunities within and outside the church. All During 2009

Goal #1: Create a job description and recruit a Ministries Coordinator.

Goal #2: With the help of the Ministries Coordinator provide avenues for celebration and thanksgiving by the congregation by means of articles in the newsletter, bulletin or in a "moment for ministry" at the worship services.

Goal #3: The Ministries Coordinator will seek and identify service opportunities with various existing local ministries and welfare agencies as well as coordinate service projects within the church and community.

Goal #4: Use this increased understanding for recruitment and equipping more people to be involved in various service projects or to consider new opportunities for ministry which God may lay on our hearts.

Goal #5: Expand the annual ministry fair and encourage families and small groups to adopt a specific ministry once per year.

Goal #6: Expand awareness and participation in service ministries through use of elder - deacon districts / household functions.

Responsible party: Council, - specifically Deacons, Ministries Coordinator & Gifts/Service Team

Objective #6 - Develop programs within the area of relationship evangelism which will equip our people to better address the community's needs and interests.

Goal #1: Reorganize the current Outreach Committee into two teams or functions. A Local Outreach Team with 6 to 8 members and a Missions team with 4 members. Recruit adequate staff for each team. *Immediately*

Goal #2: The local outreach team will develop a program to start this fall, to train members who would make a specific time commitment to learn how to share their testimony and develop a heart for the lost. *Fall 2008*

Goal #3: Meet with youth groups and others to provide training in relational evangelism. *Early 2009.*

Goal #4: The local evangelism team will meet with various ministries (i.e. Coffee Break, GEMS, Cadets, etc.) to provide training and coordinate plans to reach out to the Community. *Spring 2009.*

Responsible party: Council and Outreach Committee(s)

Objective #7 - Encourage & foster a greater spirit of welcoming, enfolding, care & mutual support within the congregation as well as to guests and the community.

Goal #1: Under the direction of the Fellowship Committee identify friendly outgoing persons to organize and foster intentional welcoming. This would include organizing and promoting a multiple touch welcoming program and regular use of name tags. *Within 6 months*

Goal #2: Strengthen and enhance the fellowship, visitation and communication support & ministry of the Elder/Deacon districts by considering and implementing a Household Program where each district has a coordinator to assure each person is warmly supported by a group of caring fellow Christians. *By end of 2008*

Goal #3: Connect frequent guests with a host family or member and/or household to welcome enfold and support them. *By end of 2008*

Responsible party: District Elders and Deacons, Pastor of Congregational Life, & Fellowship Team

VII. COMMENT ON RESOURCES

It is our desire that our church be organized to support ministry in the most effective way. We should commit to training and equipping our leaders and to fully empower others for works of service.

We envision a church that is “staff driven” in the sense that there is someone who has a passion for the ministry, has the skills and training through the active support of the church. These persons need not be full time paid staff. However, these directors will be encouraged and prayed for by the whole congregation. We envision that accountability will take the primary form of regularly asking the question of one another “What do you need to do your ministry in the best possible way?” and then prayerfully working at these things together.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION and PROGRESS REVIEW

We recommend that with the final and formal adoption of this report the council appoint a Strategic Action Leadership Team (SALT) made up of the senior pastor, staff, council members, some members of the Vision Planning Team and other congregation members to implement recommendations, communicate direction, and review progress. The VPT believes that regular review of progress and adjustments to the plan based on new information is integral to continuous improvement and maintenance of ministry. We urge the council to include regular progress reporting on their agendas. We also recommend that council (along with ministry leadership) schedule an annual retreat for more in-depth evaluation of progress and to lay out the work schedule for the year ahead.

IX. FINAL NOTE

We fully believe that God has great things in store for Heritage. We ask that we all continue to be in prayer for the work here. Also we pray that each of us will be open to being used in whatever way God chooses and leads.

Thanks for this opportunity.

The Vision Planning Team