

THE VILLAGE CHURCH

ECO: A covenant order of evangelical Presbyterians

Report of the Vision Team

A study and recommendations to Church session as we seek to build a flourishing church.

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Village Church – 2017 Vision

We are a congregation of just under 200 members in a geographic area of 43,200 people. Local population has grown by almost 20% since the year 2000 and is projected to continue to grow at about 5% per year. We feel blessed to have maintained our membership constant over the past five years in the face of declining faith receptivity in the population as a whole. New members have primarily been in the Boomer cohort as they gravitate to our church upon retiring and moving to Tahoe but 43% of our congregation is under the age of 56. This is lower than their representation in the community, but in a sense, they are overrepresented in our congregation based on the very low faith receptivity of the “Survivor” and “Millennial” cohorts.

The local community is about 78% Anglo, 15% Hispanic, and 4% Asian while our congregation is almost exclusively Anglo.

Our congregation is faithful, active, wealthy and involved, which provides substantial advantages to any enterprise we may choose. Over the past four years we have successfully moved our denominational affiliation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to ECO, restoring our firm reliance on Biblical values. We have also embraced Jeff Ogden as our new pastor, who succeeded our long time pastor Dick Randall. Both transitions went smoothly, and, if anything, have improved the congregation’s ability to be effective evangelists in the community at large. We embrace ECO’s mission to “build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ.” As followers of Christ, it saddens us to see the decreasing levels of faith receptivity in our community and we feel called to engage the community through service to open their hearts to receive Him. Any success in this area will strengthen our church community by increasing its size, adding youthful energy, and expanding its capacity for service – causing us to “flourish.”

We have elected to organize our efforts in the following four initiatives, each of which is addressed in some detail in the following pages. Initiatives:

- Maintain and enhance infrastructure
- Enhance a culture of worship
- Create a culture of outreach
- Create a culture of small groups

Maintain and Enhance Infrastructure

Our church facility and the outdoor chapel require constant maintenance and afford opportunities for upgrading. We will build a multi-year plan addressing major maintenance and capital expenditures to allow for control and budgeting. Priorities in these areas include:

1. Upgrading our internet bandwidth both to improve internal Wi-Fi speeds and to enable all of our web-based communications, including the transmission of video.
2. Improving our signage within and around the church with a focus on welcoming and guiding guests and visitors
3. Redecorating the Narthex and Fireside room. The intention is to add warmth and spirituality to welcome guests and church members.
4. Including in our maintenance and capital plan the following items:
 - a. Three visitor spaces in the parking lot. These will be next to the spot allocated for the church SUV.
 - b. Painting of church building
 - c. Parking lot renovation.
5. Outdoor chapel improvements including:
 - a. Walkways
 - b. Lighting
 - c. Audio
 - d. A new communion table built from local rock
 - e. New foam pads for seating.

We are also considering the opportunity of building a columbarium and memory garden.

Enhance a Culture of Worship

(Music, Stewardship, Fellowship, Study)

The Percept study showed that our congregation is highly satisfied with our Sunday worship services, including our summer outdoor worship. Since worshipping God is foundational to any church, we are fortunate to have such a solid platform for our church's vision. Our vision for worship is to engage in what we expect will be steady, incremental change, nourishing the strong parts of our worship activities, and improving in the others, all with an eye to supporting our goal of becoming a flourishing church that attracts new members through serving our community.

We intend to continue with two services on Sunday morning at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m, with the summertime 10 a.m services to be held in our outdoor chapel. These times fit well with the active lifestyles of our congregants, and mesh with our after service fellowship activities.

Changes should be carefully assessed and managed by church elders, as we test the pace and effectiveness of our progress toward our new vision. Priorities in strengthening worship include:

1. Increasing our focus on welcoming visitors as described in the Outreach initiative. We will continue to introduce visitors during the service.
2. Leaving the content of our worship services largely "as is" with the children's message, prayer of confession, pastoral prayers, offertory prayer and music, benediction and benediction response
3. Including personal testimony at times during the year. This may include lay preaching or testimony from elders, and testimony/lessons gained from service and mission activities, both local and overseas.
4. Involving current musicians and song leaders in seeking to continually improve the contribution of music to our worship, both at the 8:00 and 10:00 services. This will include adding other instruments as talent is available, greater age diversity in the praise team and some focus on adding energy at the 8:00 service.

Create a Culture of Outreach

Our goal is to find new ways to raise awareness of our church in the community, to build personal relationships through small group and service activities, and to use these personal relationships as the foundation for attracting newcomers to Christ. We will also continue to help guide the faithful who move to the northshore to become members of our church. We would consider it a success to increase our membership by 10% over the next five years. Activities to support these objectives include:

1. Preparing a job description for an "Outreach Elder" who will put together a welcome team and action plan.
2. Introducing ourselves to new residents. This could include including a Village Church flyer in the Post Office's welcome package. We will have a member of our welcome committee meet with each new family to help them get settled into the community.
3. Seeking to make visitors welcome from the moment they arrive at our church. We will encourage the sponsors of visitors to ensure they act as welcoming hosts before, during and after the worship service. Our ushers will be the front line in a welcoming committee. We will also task members with greeting visitors, and inviting them to join us for after church hospitality.
4. Raising the level, quality and consistency of communication to the community through media exposure. We are in discussion with the Bonanza staff on the frequency, scope and position of our advertisements, coordinating worship announcements, pre-school and youth group publicity, and our schedule of small group and service activities
5. Reconfiguring and upgrading our website. Important goals include communicating our beliefs and values as a church, easy access to podcasts/videos of sermons, easy access to information on our important activities including the pre-school, thrift shop, service activities and small groups. It should also provide a regularly updated video library of church activities, especially those involving service to the community. Updating schedules and images will be time consuming, and so we are evaluating adding resources to unburden church staff.
6. Expanding our recreational and small group activities to include all in the community, including newcomers
7. Expanding service opportunities

Create a Culture of Small Groups

The growth of small group participation is crucial to our vision of becoming a flourishing church that makes disciples of Jesus Christ. Our goal is to expand the small groups that we have and establish new groups as there is interest. We intend to tie a worship aspect to each group and challenge it to lead a service activity on a routine schedule, perhaps monthly, quarterly or annually.

Current Small Groups include: Session; Deacons; Thrift Shop; Women's Ministry; Hospitality; Multiple Bible Studies; Softball; Hiking

Potential small groups include: Book club; Knitting; Bridge; Photography; Cooking; Parenting; etc.

Activities to support small group growth include:

1. Preparing a job description for a "Small Group Elder"
2. Educating and promoting the importance of belonging to a small group.
3. Encouraging small group formation and growth
4. Developing and implementing a training program for small group leaders
5. Surveying the congregation to establish interests and get going with leaders and locations.