

Vision Message: Brandywine On the Move, 11/13/22

The largest **manmade wave pool [Picture]** in the world at Surf Lakes in Yeppoon, Australia. An astounding 240 surfers can catch up to 8ft. surfs producing 2000 waves per hour. What generates these waves at such magnitude and frequency? At the center of the pool is a 1,400-ton pressurized plunging mechanism creating circular concentric swells that radiate throughout the pool. Surf's up!

What a captivating image of Christ's design for His church! As Jesus was giving his final marching orders to his followers just before his ascension, Acts 1:⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem**, and in **all Judea** and **Samaria**, and to the **ends of the earth (beyond)**.* This became the blueprint for the 1st century church. The Jerusalem Church, the Antioch Church, The Ephesus Church, Macedonian Church everywhere the gospel spread and the church was planted, those Christ followers in that church were sent as witnesses in their community and beyond. If it was the blueprint for Antioch church then it ought to be the **blueprint for Brandywine Valley Church [Picture]**. It seems that some churches and some Christians think that the mission of the church is more like **THIS [Picture]**, just kind of floating, no waves, nothing's on the move, just kind of chillin on a floatie feeling good. No, the church is **THIS [Picture]**, on the move, taking risks, making disciples, making waves beyond our walls, out into the community with the gospel.

It is Christ's vision of the **church on the move [title slide]** that motivated our church in 2020 to pay off the remaining debt and unleash ministry resources back into our budget increase impact, that enabled us to hire our church mobilization pastor, Terry Foester. Christ's vision is at the heart of our serving efforts and what made *Go Sunday* in June a success. Over 300 of us were sent to over 20 locations like surf waves to demonstrate and declare the gospel in our community. It is the vision behind the 90 students and leaders who were sent out on mission to three locations to experience life-transformation and make an impact for Christ. Christ's vision motivates Philly Blitz last week when dozens of 3-5th graders and leaders went on mission in Philly. His vision is also at the heart of so many stories of life-changing impact among our congregation and our partnerships with many community ministries like Broken Beginnings and ESL. Praise God for all of this great gospel work. But let us not get comfortable, and begin to think we are just on floats in a pool. That is the great killer of ministry. We press forward, being willing to take risks for the Lord, because there are hundreds of thousands of lost and broken people in a 10-mile radius who need to see and hear the gospel. Demonstrated in love and declared in truth.

Over the next few years, we believe the Spirit is leading us to be a church on the move through three key initiatives. **Building Our Faith, Reaching Our Community and Shaping our Future**. I'd like to take a few minutes to flesh out what each of these phrases mean and provide some steps we will take next year, and then finish by asking you to take a risk. **Initiative #1 Building Our Faith. Committed to building resilient disciples of Jesus in an increasingly post-Christian culture.** By **post-Christian**, I mean that a Christian worldview along with the system of values and practices no longer sits at the center of our way of life. Post-Christian cultures like many

European countries tend to be hardened to the gospel and have a been-there-done-that attitude toward religion. We could argue as to whether America will ever become so post-Christian as Europe, but statistics would tell us there are lots of signs. In the last two decades, the number of 20-30s (Gen Z and Millennials) in church has dropped in half, and while still 75% of Americans consider themselves Christian, only 8% actually hold to a Biblical worldview and lifestyle that would mark them as Christ-followers.¹ Make no mistake, our increasingly post-Christian culture is “making disciples” everyday- through digital mass-marketing of entertainment, the dissemination of destructive ideologies, and shifting values...and they are incredibly effective. We need counter formation to build resilient disciples to Christ. We believe resilient disciples are committed to following Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. Resilient disciples are battle-tested, culturally discerning, prepared to accept suffering for their faith. Over the next year- you can expect us to Next Step: Develop a clear pathway and equipping environments for the formation of resilient disciples. And those of you who are seasoned vets, we need you! Your role is to help the younger generations- the parents, families, singles, youth...to build resilience.

Initiative #2 Reaching our community. We are committed to mobilizing our church to demonstrate and declare the gospel of Jesus.

George Barna- “In its first 200 years, America could count on the consistency of its people’s faith commitments, and with that, common views about morality, purpose, family, lifestyle, citizenship, and values.

But as my recent worldview research clearly shows, the United States has become one of the largest and most important mission fields in the world.”

If you don’t think that’s true, take an inventory of the street you live on. Just on my street- alcoholic agnostic who thinks his wife’s faith is crazy, a nominal Catholic family...the husband told me while high that he doesn’t think he believes any of this stuff, that his wife hates him and that the Catholic church is corrupt, a few houses down in the middle of the pandemic, a lonely man committed suicide, another neighbor whose wife left him he’s struggling to cope with the pain and anger, and another family that lives in a big house with fancy cars and house cleaners who I have heard speak of the deep emptiness in their lives. I could go on, but my neighborhood is not unique.

And while our marching orders could not be more clear as Christ followers, a ¼ of Christians don’t believe it is their responsibility to share their faith and only half of Christians said they shared their faith in the last year. We can do better, we must do better and the Spirit empowers us to do better.

Next year we are going to begin an initiative to equip everyone who calls Brandywine their church home with at least one culturally effective way to share their faith and challenge you to

¹ Barna Research, quoted in *Resilient and Faith for Exiles*

pursue opportunities in your sphere of influence. Along with this, Feb. preaching series for missions month with be on resilience in our outreach efforts along with a Prayer initiative 40 Days of Lent. We also intend to launch the Alpha course as a great invest and invite tool for those you know who don't know Jesus. Another goal is for us to hit 80% participation in GO Week, May 1-7.

Initiative #3 Shaping Our Future. We are committed to repurposing our building to align with our current and future ministry priorities. If we are going to be effective at our mission, introducing people to Jesus- we need to maximize our hospitality within our 2nd greatest asset, our church campus.

While our sanctuary is only less than 15 years old, many of you know that large portions of our East and West wings have had few to no updates and renovations since they were built in the 70s. We believe now is the time to begin addressing key areas of improvement in our building. Three key renovation areas: **1: Redesign our Primary Entrance Level Community Spaces**- we want to double our community space for people to get coffee, meet, have fellowship, which will greatly decrease the noise issues we have in our lobby. **2: Convert our East Wing into a Children's Ministry Wing** upstairs and downstairs. Currently if you are a parent or a grandparent, or serve in Children's ministry, you are aware that there are multiple different drop off places for different ages all throughout the building, creating some confusion, could be a safety concern for some parents. We want to create one place for Children's ministry and our preschool ministry through the week, that maximizes safety, learning and accessibility. Part of that redesign is creating a sensory room for the growing needs of parents and children who are differently abled a variety of cognitive, behavioral needs. **3: Bring Design Coherence to our External Expression Building.** That's architect speak for make it look not ugly. Update street view appeal and visibility (signage, exterior building) Update arrival experience from parking lot to entrance. Todd will be talking more about this in his update.

Building Our Faith, Reaching Our Community and Shaping our Future. Here's the challenge to you today. Are you on a surfboard or a floatie [Slide]? This is our mission. Brandywine is on the move, we hope you are with us as well. You received a surfboard sticker. Put this somewhere to remind yourself- You are on the move with us!