

A VISION FOR OUR CHURCH

OUR NAME:



On the path to a Jesus culture

OUR VERSE:



“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Impress them on your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

–Deuteronomy 6:6-7

OUR VERSE:



“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.”

–Psalm 119:105

OUR MISSION:



On the path to a Jesus culture
by focusing on:

GOD – walking with Him

EACH OTHER – supporting
each other's walk with God

WORLD – sharing our walk with
God with others.

OUR PATH to a Jesus Culture:

As a group of people saved by Jesus, we have a passion for Him – to follow, love, and serve Him, to worship, know, and honor Him, to walk and talk with Him, to share Him with others – to always ask: What would Jesus do? and then try to do it. This passion for Jesus influences how we work and play, how we create and innovate, how we relate to and care for others, how we do family, how we use our resources, and how we interact with our world. Allowing Jesus to influence all we are and all we do as a community is the walk with God – the Jesus Culture – we seek.

1



INDIVIDUALS: We encourage each person to have a talking, listening, growing relationship with God that begins with praying and reading the Bible daily. We encourage each person to share that relationship with others.

2



COUPLES: We encourage each couple to have a talking, listening, growing relationship with God and each other, beginning with prayer and reading the Bible together. We encourage couples to share with others their resulting relationships with Jesus and with each other.

3



FAMILIES: We encourage family behaviors and practices that start in the home that bring family members into a closer relationship with Jesus (the Head) and each other (the body). We encourage each family to share with others their growing relationship with Jesus.

4



SMALL GROUPS: We encourage singles, couples, and families to be supported in and to share their walk with God in small groups and programs of the church.



5



WORSHIP: We encourage singles, couples and families that meet in small groups to come together for support and celebration of their walk with God in worship gatherings.

6



KINGDOM: We encourage everyone in the church to connect with the work of God in the Kingdom (His work beyond our church) both near and far.

7



WORLD (OUTREACH): We encourage individuals, couples and families to expand this Jesus culture to our work places, neighborhoods, communities, country, and world.

It is our prayer and earnest desire that God, by His grace, would bring this Jesus culture about by transforming us and the people to whom we are connected – as we seek to follow Him, step by step, through the power of the Holy Spirit as He works through prayer and the Word.

OUR STRATEGY:

A step-by-step strategy – on the path to a Jesus culture

The Home (steps 1-3):

The home is the basic building block of society and the church. The Faith is passed down best in homes. As a group of people we want to help each other succeed in the home (dorm, apartment, condo, house). We seek to do this by encouraging the basic Christian practices that have characterized the passing of the faith for centuries. These practices include reading the Bible every day, prayer, Bible memorization, singing, worship, hospitality, and sharing with others. We then seek to help the home become the lighthouse to the neighborhood, the community and even the world. Those without stable homes we seek to connect to stable homes.



Small Groups & programs (step 4):

Small groups

Our small groups try to meet 2 or 3 times a month to help support the home based practices. The small groups are like transformer stations boosting the signal to the homes so they can be the lighthouses in the darkness. Most groups will start out with studies that help people get a walk with God in their personal life, marriage, or family. They will then follow with a study that helps the groups reinforce the Bible readings and prayer but also helps members start doing hospitality with others who need a walk with God. The hope is that each member will start their own group one day. Similar studies that accomplish the same basic goals will be considered and developed. We hope to grow many options that accomplish the basic purpose of our small groups.

Programs

Programs are specialized small groups whose purpose is to support the practices and habits – the Jesus culture – we are trying to support in our homes.

Little Lambs – (ages 2 1/2 - 3)

Meets Sunday morning during the worship service with the goal of assisting parents in the task of passing on the faith to their young children.

Worship Center – (pre K - 2nd grade)

Meets Sunday morning during the worship service with a goal of assisting parents in the task of passing on the faith to their young children. Special attention will be given to the Bible readings that the whole family is doing.

Boys & Girls Club – (3rd grade - 8th grade)

Meets on Tuesday night. The goal here is to once again assist families in the task of passing on the faith to their children. They will be studying one of the passages of the Bible readings the whole family is doing. Special attention will be given to involving the parents. There may be children in the program whose parents can't be involved. We will have volunteer adults to step in to help. We want to be a family to those that need one.

Youth Group – (9th grade - 12th grade)

Will meet (tentatively) every 2nd and 4th Sunday night. The goal is to partner with parents to introduce Jesus to their children – to help them in their job of preparing

their children for leadership in life and the church. Special attention will be given to the Bible readings and how they intersect with the relevant issues of our young peoples' lives.

Note: The goal in our children and youth programs is not to take the place of the discipleship of the home, but to support it, encourage it, and **add** to it. Parents struggle to keep the family together in a society that has so many special interest activities that pull family members into their own things (their own music, clothes, activities, friends, sports, hobbies). The church has an opportunity to offer something new – how can we help parents keep their families together? So youth and children's programs need to tie back to the home. They also need the involvement of parents. We want to make a beginning down this path.

Task Forces

We have several task forces that are small groups of people that meet for a season to meet a particular need – i.e. The camp out, the awards banquet, choir, the garage sale ... These task forces are important because they get things done. Because most are not permanent, they also allow new people easy access.

Worship service (step 5):

The goal of the Sunday morning worship is to be the culmination of all the worship – the Bible reading, memorization, singing, praying, sharing – that has been going on all during the week – all for the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is God praised but we, the body, are built up and encouraged in the Jesus culture that we have been trying to live in our homes, small group activities, our neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities. There are many task forces that help make this event happen (nursery, greeters, hosts, music team, janitor, refreshment providers, production team, secretary).

Kingdom activities (step 6):

We are part of a community of churches in Byron Center and need to be a part of that ministerial (name given to a regions interdenominational Pastors meeting) – to encourage and be encouraged. We are also part of a denomination – the Christian Reformed Church. We are under that authority and participate in the local Grandville Classis. We also desire to be a part of what God is doing with God's people around the world.

Outreach (step 7):

As we engage God in all these steps (Steps 1-6) our enthusiasm for God will overflow to others who do not have any or much of a relationship with God. We will joyfully seek to share our walk with God – our Jesus culture with those that don't know it or have it. We seek to do that first of all in our personal life, our marriages and families, by praying for specific people, practicing hospitality with them, helping to meet their physical needs, inviting them to join us in our walk. Secondly, we seek to support this desire for outreach in our small groups and programs, and our worship service. Special task forces and events will be planned to help facilitate this out reach desire.

Multi-stepping activities (steps 1-7):

Some activities of the church do not fall neatly into one of these 7 steps because they cross over many or all of them.

Preaching

The preaching that happens on Sunday morning (Step 5) is really the culmination of all the preaching done in all the other steps (Step 1-7). Preaching, when broken down to its simplest

form, is just reading the Word of God with a prayerful attitude and telling someone else about it (Step 1&2). So preaching starts in the home (Step 3). It is reinforced in the small groups and programs of the church (Step 4). It is strengthened by being a part of a denomination and Gods people around the world (Step 6), and it comes alive because of our desire to tell or show others the good news (Step 7). The goal is to inspire every person, marriage and family to keep listening to God through the Word and prayer so that what is seen in the Word is connected to one's day, one's week, one's life. And through all this connecting we come to know and love Jesus more and more. Sermons will, with the exception of a few series, follow the Bible reading for the week. They will be seeker friendly and life related. Creative ways to communicate will be pursued.

Music

Music is a praise language God has given to us to bring us closer to Him and to each other. It allows us to visibly and audibly express and experience our praise to God. This language needs to be cultivated, worked on – starting in the Home (Step 1-3). It is then supported by small groups, youth programs, children's programs, guitar Sunday, CDs with parts, praise and potluck nights, normal socializing (inviting a family over and doing some singing), choir opportunities (Step 4-7). The culmination of all this music activity is the worship service (Step 5) where all the interest and practicing and playing comes together. Our desire is to help every one in their ability and love of this language by creating “playing fields” where each one can develop at whatever level they currently find themselves.

Leadership

Leadership begins with each person, single or married, walking with God and learning how to follow – follow Jesus our Lord and Master. So all leadership in the church begins with following. Leadership, for singles, is experienced among friends. Leadership, for those married, is then shared in a marriage and for those with children, exercised in the family. It is expanded, tested, and supported in leading small groups, programs and task forces of the church. The next layer of leadership is the monthly leadership meeting (all small group and program leaders invited). Then the consistory (elders and deacons) and staff. And finally there is the denominational authority that the consistory answers to. If we are followers of Christ, we are all leaders. One grows as a leader by serving others, first in your home (dorm room, apartment) and then expanding outwardly.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care starts in the home. The parents or a single parent must care for the children. Married couples must care for each other. Singles need a friendship circle that cares for them. Small groups are then the next line of care with the small group leader taking special attention. The next line of care is the leaders that attend the leaders meeting. Then there are the elders and deacons and the staff. Finally the Pastors – Steve and associate pastor. Beyond the Pastors there are Christian counselors and gifted Christian specialists.

Discipleship

To learn about discipleship we need to look at Jesus. He spent three years, living with, spending time with, talking, listening, repeatedly with 12 men. He taught them; he showed them. He believed in them. He challenged them to do more than they could have imagined. He empowered them. Then He told them to go and do the same with others. That is our goal in all that we do. We want to be disciples – followers of Jesus. And we want to make disciples. This is our ultimate goal. If we were to measure anything, if we are to be held accountable for anything, if we are going to keep track of anything – this is it.

OUR CULTURAL LANGUAGE:

“Talking, listening, repeatedly”

Talking to God in Prayer. Listening to God through the Bible. These are the basics in a relationship with God, each other, and with those who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Over time, through the Holy Spirit, through the ups and downs, the positive experiences and negative, the joys and sorrows, God’s grace has its way more and more and what was broken becomes whole.

“Press on”

God has and will always be there to strengthen His people who, despite hardship, trials, and struggles, have been strengthened by the power of the Word and Spirit to press on.

“God is not finished with me”

We strive to challenge each other to step out of our comfort zones, experience new things, try, fail sometimes, and try again.

“Core and electives”

There are core practices that everyone is called to do. Every one is encouraged to have their own walk with God and to share that walk. How one does it or how well one does it depends on the gifts, talents and opportunities God gives each person. Electives are practices and opportunities that apply to specific gifts and interests.

“Everyone plays”

People develop their gifts and talents best when given the chance to play – use their gift – with people close to their own level. We need many levels so all can have the chance to experience “iron sharpening iron” and become all that God has dreamed for each person.

“Connection”

We believe there is a connection between what we read in God’s Word every day and what happens in our day. Through the Spirit, through practice, through the encouragement and insights of others, we hope to become more and more aware of these connections. God will direct our path through these connections.

“It takes a culture”

We succeed best in areas supported by a group of people doing the same things. The group provides encouragement, accountability, and challenge to help us do what God is calling us to do.

“Disciples who make disciples”

As disciples of Jesus we seek to do as He did. He made disciples who went on to make more disciples. That is our goal with every person we connect with: To help them become disciples but also to help them make disciples.

“Mi casa es su casa” / “My house is your house”

People matter to God. People matter to us. We invite people into our homes and lives. We care about people. We share with people. We sacrifice for people.