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Signature:

Preaching for Vision Casting

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Abstract

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This project tells the story of a congregational visioning process and how the vision was preached in the church. In documenting the process, the narrative includes the problem that the project addresses within the church context and captures the strategic visioning work that was accomplished. In particular, it reflects on the role of preaching in the process and its function as the primary vision casting method. It also explores a theology of visioning, preaching and growth. The thesis for this project is that preaching the church's unique vision is the catalyst for the church's peak growth. The research reflects in detail on how the project unfolded, discusses the methodology used and the ways it informed preaching the vision for the congregation. It also highlights some of the initial outcomes of the visioning process as they have reflected the vision and the work still to be done.

Preaching for Vision Casting

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Part I: INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2017, I began my ministry as the senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton. One of my initial tasks was to sit down and have one-on-one conversations with the staff and elders of the church. In the list of several questions for discussion, I included what I felt to be the key question: *What is the vision of the church?* Out of the thirty conversations I had, only one person mentioned the words of the vision that were on the church website at that time: “Together, we celebrate, journey, and serve.” There were thirty different answers to my question. Notably, more than half of those I spoke with said the church did not actually have a vision. My conclusion was this: *I was serving a vision-starved congregation.* The Old King James translation of Proverbs 29:18 sums up the situation: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Within the next year, we began a journey that would culminate in a new vision for the church. This project tells the story of that process, documents the strategic visioning work that was accomplished, and identifies some of the initial results. In particular, I will reflect on the role of preaching in the process and its function as the primary vision casting method. My thesis for this project is: *preaching the church's unique vision is the catalyst for the church's peak growth.* Going forward, the results of the project will guide the future ministry of the church.

In documenting the process, I will first present in detail the problem that the project addresses within the church context. I will then probe deeper into a theology of visioning, preaching and growth. I will also discuss the methodology used, how the project unfolded and the ways it informed preaching the vision for the congregation. Finally, I will highlight some of the initial outcomes of the visioning process as they have reflected the vision and the work still to be done.

Part II: STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Wheaton, IL is a western suburb of Chicago located on one of the main train lines. Wheaton itself was founded by the Wheaton family as a rail depot. The town was settled in 1838 and incorporated as a city in 1890.¹ Much of the ethos of the community is family-oriented. After having kids, many couples who live in Chicago choose Wheaton or a neighboring western suburb because of the family resources and affordability as compared to other locations, like the north shore of Chicago. The city of Wheaton has a large park district which operates community pools, a small zoo, and recreation center. The schools are highly-ranked making that another factor attracting many young families and the city was recently ranked one of the “Best Places to Live 2018.”²

There are approximately 53,000 residents in Wheaton and the city serves as the County Seat of DuPage County.³ It is a safe place to live with many long-term residents. There are several retirement homes that care for an elderly population. There are a prevalence of churches in Wheaton. Within a mile of First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton, there are Anglican, Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Catholic, and nondenominational churches.⁴ Each of these churches range in size from 200 to 2,000 people in attendance each Sunday. Historically, many Christian publishers are located in Chicago and the western suburbs including Wheaton.⁵ Whether it is seeing people pray in public before a meal at a restaurant or encountering Wheaton

¹ “History of Wheaton,” City of Wheaton, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.wheaton.il.us/367/History-of-Wheaton>.

² “Best Places to Live 2018,” Money, accessed February 6, 2019, <http://money.com/money/collection/2018-best-places-to-live/5361480/wheaton-illinois-2/>

³ “About Wheaton,” City of Wheaton, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.wheaton.il.us/365/About-Wheaton>

⁴ See Appendix 1 for church map.

⁵ “Chicago Is Sweet Home for Religion Publishers,” Publishers Weekly, accessed February 6, 2019, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/religion/article/64126-chicago-is-sweet-home-for-religion-publishers.html>

College students in local coffee shops, a Christian culture dominates the religious landscape of the community.

First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton is a 110-year-old congregation. The church is part of the Presbyterian Church (USA) denomination and is a member of the Chicago Presbytery. As part of a mainline denomination, the church is located in a strongly evangelical community, due in large part to the presence of Wheaton College, an evangelical liberal arts school. In the beginning, 26 charter members formed the church after breaking away from a Congregational church. The church currently has 1037 members with an average worship attendance of 310 people. The church is comprised of one-third male and two thirds female members. While there is very little racial-ethnic diversity (99% White, 0.4% Asian, 0.3% Hispanic, 0.01 Native American), there are a wide range of age levels.⁶

There are 12 staff positions at the church, 6 of which are full-time. Each senior pastor in the history of the church has stayed an average of ten years. The leadership of the church includes 12 elders and 32 deacons. The church offers two Sunday services with a traditional worship style including liturgy and choir, though often the worship has blended musical elements such as a worship band or orchestra. On Sundays, the church still follows an education for all ages format that takes place between the two services. There are strong youth and children's ministries that take place throughout the week. The church is heavily involved in local mission work, helping to fund over twenty community organizations, with significant support devoted to transitional housing which offers respite for families over a one-year span who face hardship. The annual budget of the church is approximately \$1.2 million. Upon my arrival, the church had stabilized under the leadership of a two-year interim senior pastor, following years of decline.

⁶ See Appendix 2 for diversity of membership.

In 2015, for the first time in fifteen years, worship attendance plateaued instead of declining and giving increased.⁷ From the year 2000 to 2015, First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton was on a slow, but steady decline. In that time span, overall worship attendance decreased by 54%, from an average Sunday morning attendance of 700 in 2000 to below 300 in 2015. Not only had numerical growth stopped, but it severely declined over time as indicated by the decrease in attendance. What made the decline so difficult to remedy, is that it happened over many years. It was not a sudden decrease that caused immediate concern. Over those years, the church had lost what researcher Carol Dweck calls a *growth mindset*, a perspective which previously enabled it to grow and thrive. In years past, the pastor went door to door explaining that the church was growing and building programs for families. Additionally, the church had developed a system of committees where a growth mindset was ingrained and there was responsibility within each ministry team to support the expansion of the church. Dweck describes the *growth mindset* by explaining, “The view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you live your life.”⁸ Each leader within the church went through a training to ensure they were prepared to lead with a growth mindset. Eventually, the training was abandoned as the emphasis shifted to other ministries. While Dweck describes growth mindset on a personal level, during years of decline the mindset of the organization, in this case, had shifted from a growth to a *fixed* perspective. Financial resources and volunteers became increasingly limited. A decision was made to eliminate one of three pastoral positions and giving for mission was decreased. The viewpoint was that of managing decline. Rather than seeing growth in attendance as possible, a fixed perspective of decline permeated the church.

⁷ See Appendix 3 for attendance graph.

⁸ Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Penguin Random House), 6.

While the church had lost members and financial resources, the problem was that it also became disconnected from a sense of what the classic church growth theorist Donald McGavran called the *church growth theory*. Like Dweck's growth mindset, the church growth theory states that a church can and should be growing through spreading God's word and planting churches. In his 1977 book, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, McGavran describes the church growth theory as, "A universal truth which, when properly interpreted and applied, contributes significantly to the growth of churches and denominations. It is a truth of God which leads his church to spread his Good News, plant church after church, and increase his body."⁹ The truth about which McGavran writes is the modern church's continuation of the spread of the church in Acts chapter 2, a scripture which will serve as the biblical foundation for this project. The church growth theory and its perspective had been present in the church before. The leaders of the church had the perspective that not only should First Presbyterian be growing, but it should be helping other churches to grow. In the early 1970s, the pastor and elders made an intentional decision. Rather than expanding the church campus to accommodate further growth, they would take part in helping to start new churches. During the late 1970s, First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton planted two other neighboring congregations, Hope Presbyterian Church and Heritage Presbyterian Church. Both churches are still operating today. Despite these efforts in prior years, the value of growth within the church laid dormant. Not only had First Presbyterian experienced significant decline, but it also became disconnected from the growth of other churches in the community. While the church growth theory is a helpful viewpoint for encouraging growth and was successful for many churches during the church growth movement of the 1960-70s, the church landscape is even more complex today. In the current culture, a more organic and

⁹ Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 15.

intentional model would be needed to facilitate lasting growth and change like the one I will describe in this project.

Two decades ago, missiologist and professor Darrell Guder made an observation as it related to the challenge of the declining church in North America, “Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus, our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church.”¹⁰ For example, a church might be engaged in supporting a mission to the homeless in the community, either directly or indirectly, but not be seeking to allow God’s greater mission in the world to guide its ministries, to become its vision. Guder summarizes the reality that being a missional church would be critical to the church’s ability to engage the culture and reverse the missional effectiveness of the church. Just as he writes of the need to move from a church with mission to a missional church, so too the problem I faced was moving from a church with vision, even if it had faded from view, to a visionary church. From my perspective, a visionary church paints a picture of what is possible when God’s mission is revealed through the vision of a local church. A visionary church is willing to risk for the vision and trust God’s leading. Each aspect of ministry is infused with a compelling potential to fulfill a greater purpose. Based on Guder’s missional model, in this kind of church the vision is embodied in worship, Bible study and everything the church does. A visionary church would keep the vision within view and allows it to encourage peak growth.

The First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton campus sits on a beautiful piece of property and the building is reflective of a Georgian style of architecture with a red brick facade. The building is impressive and well-maintained. The members of the church take great pride in the building and campus. There is nothing wrong with being proud of a building. The problem was,

¹⁰ Darrell Guder and Lois Barrett, *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 6.

the church began to draw its identity from the building itself, instead of from a vision for ministry. During a meeting of elders after the start of my ministry, I asked the question, “Describe the best moment of the church since you have been a part of it?” More than half of the responses had to do with completing the expansion of the building. Surprisingly, the building project was completed in the year 2000, around the time the church began a period of decline. Two separate capital campaigns were initiated for the building, but none of the financial investment helped to launch new programs, ministries, or help facilitate church growth.

In some ways, the church developed a kind of fortress mentality. In *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, author Thom Rainer reflects on how when a church loses a vision for ministry, a fortress mentality can set in. In his research of dying churches, he says, “People in the community did not feel welcomed in the church. Those in the church were more concerned about protecting the way they did church than reaching residents of the community. These churches are really fortresses. The very thought of making significant changes to reach and impact the community is frightening.”¹¹ Though the building itself expanded in square footage, the rest of the church moved in the opposite direction. The ministry space was doubled as a result of the expansion, but approximately 25 people a year would stop attending the church over the next 15 years. While there was a pastoral transition during the years of decline, the overall decrease across the church was steady and never drastic any given year.¹²

With all that the church had experienced, during my interview process, it became clear to me that the church was ready to turn the page on the next chapter of ministry. The job description itself referenced looking for a pastor that would help the church move from a season

¹¹ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 35.

¹² See Appendix 3 for attendance graph.

of decline into one of growth. Several of interview questions focused on how I would go about helping to grow the church. It was in early conversations with members of the church that one thing became clear and the main problem presented itself: *there was no vision*. Yes, there was technically a vision (“together, we celebrate, journey, and serve”) on the church website, on letterhead, in a PowerPoint buried on someone’s computer. Yet even though there were words of a vision, it was essentially unrecognizable. The vision had faded from view.

About four years earlier, the previous pastor had attempted to initiate a visioning process. A small group of people was assembled to do the visioning work, however, it never included the church staff, elders, or the congregation as a whole. That pastor stayed at the church only about a year following the release of the vision, but was present for the initial rollout. In reviewing the previous work that had been done, and in light of the significance of preaching in the Presbyterian tradition, I asked one crucial question from my perspective: *Was the vision ever preached?* The plain answer was: *no*. In fact, there was not much strategy around the vision being passed on to the congregation. One day, the words “together we celebrate, journey and serve” suddenly appeared on the church website and in the bulletin. The church had missed a vision handoff opportunity or time to celebrate the new vision. Therefore, the vision never took hold. Without ever being preached, the church never developed a *vision vocabulary*. What I mean by this is how the members of the church might speak about what the church is doing and why it is going about it, speaking a common language of vision. While preaching is not the only method by which a vision is cast, in a church context it can be the primary method. By not affirming the vision from the pulpit, a key element was missing. Without a Great Commission moment, there was no rallying cry or direction for where the church was going or what it was supposed to be doing.

One pastor that helped me to reflect on preaching a vision was Pastor Rich Kannwischer who leads Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA, the largest congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA) denomination. Having recently led his church through a visioning process, I spoke with him about the role of preaching. Kannwischer said, “Preaching the vision helps the church become capable of catching the vision.”¹³ He reflected further on how preaching the vision is not accomplished in one sermon or one series, but becomes part of the regular preaching for the congregation over time. The vision of the church shapes the preaching going forward. Kannwischer helped me to understand that without a vision and without an emphasis on preaching the vision, the church will struggle and its growth will be limited. I turn now to a discussion of the understanding of preaching, vision, and church growth which supports my thesis.

Part III: THEOLOGY

The theological and biblical underpinning for this project and visioning process is found in Acts chapter 2. Breaking down Acts 2 into three sections provides a similar outline that shapes my theology of the preaching, the vision, and the growth that would follow. The theology and practice of Acts 2 provided an important guide as I envisioned the structure and outcome of this project as influenced by the three main sections of Acts 2: Peter’s sermon (Acts 2:14-41) witnessing to the vision God was providing on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) and the people’s response through the growth of community (Acts 2:42-47). As I will show, each section in Acts 2 provided an inspiring and formative pattern to follow, including preaching the vision, defining the vision, and allowing the vision to shape the growth of the church.

Theology of Preaching

¹³ Rich Kannwischer, personal interview, August 17, 2018.

In a church setting, preaching is often the primary means by which a vision is cast. Once the vision for a church is articulated, it can be preached much like Peter did in his sermon in Acts 2:14-41, the first recorded sermon in the New Testament. Symbolically, Peter stood with the other eleven disciples. He knew his audience and preached the history of their faith. Peter offers a long quotation from the prophet Joel, testifying about the Pentecost experience through a prophetic lens when the Lord says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (verse 17). He also offers several quotations from King David, the patriarch of the Hebrew faith, highlighting verses from Psalms 16 and 110. He knew what would matter to the crowd of fellow Israelites. To conclude his message, Peter offered the words of salvation, a call to discipleship and invitation to baptism. He called the people to action.

Peter took the vision that God had given him, a deeply biblical message, and made it portable for the people. He helped to interpret God’s vision for the people. In his commentary on Acts, Darrell L. Bock writes, “Peter now rises to represent the Twelve (eleven plus himself) and explain the significance of what is taking place...The verb for ‘address’ was used in Acts 2:4 and discussed there. It is another term that only Luke uses in the NT, and it refers to Spirit-inspired utterance. This is no longer tongues speaking but a direct address to the crowd.”¹⁴ It is Peter’s role to steward God’s vision for the people through preaching. His words were in response to the Spirit descending at Pentecost, a new vision for all nations, and he did his best to explain to the miraculous moment. His message also resulted in a tremendous response from the people as, “God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day” (verse 41). The preaching of God’s vision mattered and was the catalyst for the missionary work that would continue over the centuries.

¹⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 110.

Peter was a witness to God's word and work. It is the idea of proclaiming and witness that captures the essence of preaching. In his landmark preaching textbook, *The Witness of Preaching*, Tom Long explains, "The move from text to sermon is a move from beholding to attesting, from seeing to saying, from listening to telling, from perceiving to testifying, from being a witness to bearing witness."¹⁵ Long's concept of bearing witness informs what I believe to be the role of preaching in the community. Like Peter and all the preachers that have followed, those who respond to God's word are witnessing to the people about God's vision for them. Ultimately, the strength of preaching is witnessing to a greater reality.

As a neighbor to Wheaton College, I have had the opportunity to get to know president Phil Ryken and spoke with him about preaching. In addition to preaching regularly to the staff and student body at the college, for fifteen years Ryken preached at the historic Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. When I asked him what helps strengthen a church most, he said, "Above every other ministry, preaching the word of God will have the greatest impact on the church."¹⁶ Ryken talked about the significance of consistently preaching the gospel and allowing the proclaimed word to cause the church's vision to powerfully spread. He helps clarify my theology of preaching which is that it is paramount in its potential to inspire and shape the community.

In the forthcoming visioning process for the church, once the vision was fully articulated by the vision team, I would take the vision into the pulpit. Much like Peter's sermon following Pentecost, I would speak about what God had done in the church and what Jesus was calling us to do. I would preach the vision for the people – to share with them how we felt the Holy Spirit was leading and to help interpret what the vision meant. As the primary vision-caster, I would

¹⁵ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 114.

¹⁶ Phil Ryken, personal interview, June 18, 2018.

use the preaching moment to tell the story of God’s vision for the church. The vision would be presented in a sermon series to proclaim in worship each aspect of the vision. It would be important to communicate that this was not a vision given by God directly to the pastor, but a vision that was discerned together, in community. Of each step in the process, preaching the vision would make it public and be the pathway for it to take hold within the church, in order to strengthen community.

Theology of Vision

My theology of vision is influenced by the Pentecost narrative of God’s vision being revealed to the people. It is worth noting that the powerful Pentecost experience took place following Jesus’ Ascension in Acts chapter 1. Jesus promises in verse 8 that the disciples, “will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (CEB). Those were Jesus’ final words before being taken up into the clouds. In Acts 2:1-13, Jesus delivers on his promise as the Holy Spirit comes on Pentecost. With regard to each person gathered speaking in their own native language and amazement of the crowd, Luke Timothy Johnson notes, “Luke uses the crowd to provide dramatic perspective on the event; the reader appreciates the dimensions of the occurrence from its effect on these observers.”¹⁷ The significance of this biblical account for our visioning process is that the revelation of God’s message to us took place among the people. It was at the church’s Annual Meeting in January 2018, when several hundred people gathered to hear about how God was working within the congregation, that we announced a focus for that year on the theme of community and the start of the visioning process. Much like the day of

¹⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 43.

Pentecost, our word from the Lord was communicated among the people and interpreted in light of the forthcoming visioning process.

Johnson observes that in verse 8, the Greek is literally, “each in his own language in which we were born.”¹⁸ The language of birth was also significant because our Pentecostal moment as a church represented new birth and new life. As we would later discover, the word community itself held a greater meaning for the members of the church. When asked about what was being done at the church in my first year, I would often say: *we are discovering the vision that God has placed before us, a vision that has been present since the founding of the church.* For the vision to ultimately take hold, it would need to come from and be accessible to the people, much like the power of the words on the day of Pentecost. Part of this accessibility is that the vision would be unique, particular to our congregation. As part of my thesis, the desire for a *unique vision* was inspired by what the early church experienced in the special revelation of the Holy Spirit’s vision on Pentecost.

Acts chapter 2 helped to establish a pattern that would guide the visioning process at First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton. A biblical and theological foundation was absent from the previous vision work that the church initiated. First, we would seek God and wait on the Lord as believers did on the day of Pentecost. In a variety of formats, we would ask the questions: *What direction is God leading us? What distinct vision has God given us? What makes our church unique?* As God’s vision is revealed for us, we would choose a blueprint for how to tell the story of the vision for the congregation. While it may not be as dramatic as the Pentecost experience, we trusted that God would speak and the Holy Spirit would give language to our vision in a way we would each understand. The value of the vision would come in its unique expression, as the

¹⁸ Ibid.

members of the congregation felt it was a faithful representation of who the church is and desires to be. By the grace given to us, the vision would speak to everyone in some way.

Beyond Acts 2, the most significant influence on my theology of vision and the primary resource utilized for the visioning process was a book called *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement*, by Will Mancini, who calls himself a *clarity evangelist*. Mancini is a pastor turned church consultant and his company Auxano helps churches discover their unique identity through a visioning process. About uniqueness, Mancini says, “The starting point for vision—for thinking about our church’s future—is not deciding where we want to go or exploring what is working for other churches but understanding how we are unique.”¹⁹ In contrast to the copycat method approach that many church conferences and consultants offer, the *Church Unique* approach includes discovering the distinct heartbeat within each congregation and making that the focus of the vision. In the vision work of years prior, there was also no blueprint or method by which a vision would be articulated, nor was much thought put into the vision being unique to the DNA of the church itself.

In my first ministry position out of college, the church I served enlisted Auxano and Mancini to guide a vision exploration. I was part of the team that helped to form a new vision for that congregation. *Church Unique* is built around a key concept: “To challenge you to find your Church Unique—that is, to live a vision that creates a stunningly unique, movement-oriented church.”²⁰ Inspired by *Church Unique*, I now understand that a unique vision is the currency of ministry. When vision is invested, its returns are recognizable. A unique vision includes

¹⁹ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, 2008), 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 313.

discerning how the Holy Spirit is moving and leading the church. While not every aspect of vision in the church can be measured, in a visionary church there is a palpable sense of vibrancy. You can see it in the expression of worship or the spirit of those serving in ministry. A uniquely visionary church has a pulse, with visible signs of life including witnessing baptisms, hearing stories of gracious hospitality, and expansive generosity. As a unique vision takes shape, the people and the pastor are stewards of the vision. The vision does not belong solely to the pastor or preacher. The pastor may be the keeper of the vision and the primary vision-caster, but a vision unique to each individual congregation belongs to God.

After arriving in Chicago, I had the opportunity to get to know Steve Carter, former lead teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church who regularly preached to 25,000 people on a weekend. As I sat down with Carter to talk about how he casts vision for a congregation so large, he said, “There are many moments for casting the vision on and off the platform or pulpit. You have to let the vision speak through you.”²¹ He rightly conveyed and helped me understand that casting the vision cannot begin and end during the preaching moment, it has to be called out continually. Casting vision is not simply done from the mountain top and cannot be limited to top down delivery. Whereas the previous vision of the church was simply dropped into people’s laps, in the new process the vision would be shared from a variety of angles: written, spoken, and strategic in the programs that are offered.

Theology of Growth

It is no coincidence that the subheading for Acts 2:42-47 in many translations of the Bible is “Community of believers” as it is written in the Common English Bible. The result of Peter’s sermon is the creation of uncommon community. The community devoted themselves to

²¹ Steve Carter, personal interview, February 1, 2018.

the teaching, to one another, sharing meals together, and to praying. These practices made the community appealing, attractive and offered an invitation to others live the vision of a vibrant community. As a result, the church grew. It is a beautiful description of community as “a sense of awe came over everyone, and God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles” (verse 43). The vision of Pentecost, Peter’s sermon, and the resulting community brought about a profound sense of unity, which ushered in an unprecedented season of growth. Everyone in this faith tribe rallied together, sharing what they had, meeting the needs of those around them. Spiritual and numerical growth was the result as people came to faith and the community thrived.

As faith increased, so did the number of those actively involved in the ministry of the community. In *The Book of Acts*, F.F. Bruce writes, “The praises of God were constantly on their tongues, and their numbers were constantly increased as he added more and more believers to the faithful remnant. It is the Lord’s prerogative to add new members to his own community; it is the joyful prerogative of existing members to welcome to their fellowship those who he has accepted.”²² The established community was contagious, more and more people wanted to be part of it, for its purity and authenticity. There was something powerful taking place and the community organized itself around the momentum they were experiencing. Signs of God working among them came about as they shared fellowship and grew daily.

The Acts 2 narrative provides glimpses of what a growing church looks like. But how can a church define growth? Is it only to be found in the ABCs of attendance, buildings, and cash? More specifically, what is *peak* growth? As I often refer to it, peak growth is the most authentic growth for a church. Achieving peak growth comes when visioning, preaching and ministry are in alignment. Peak growth can be measured by the number of people are uniting in mission, the

²² F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 74-75.

baptisms that are taking place, watching generosity as it is joyfully expressed. It is a church fully alive, experiencing a unique expression of its identity. Peak growth is different than perspective offered by McGavran and the church growth movement. Rather than focusing simply the upward numerical growth of the church, peak growth is specific to each congregation and the goal is seeing a unique vision realized.

My theology for church growth is captured by the Reformation leader John Calvin when he wrote, “The excellence of the Church does not consist in multitude but in purity.”²³ I desire that the church I lead grow and multiply, however growth itself is not the goal, but rather an outcome. Purity, as Calvin expresses, is its excellence. Purity is authenticity. Being the kind of unique church that God is calling it to be and not drifting from that call. There are any number of temptations available for churches – trying to be the church down the street or across the country. Whether it is adopting a new ministry model or organizational structure, trying to be a church other than the one God has envisioned will fail. When a church is not authentic, it suffers. Enthusiasm wanes when there ceases to be signs of who the church is and what it stands for. “Multitude” as Calvin expresses it, might become the emphasis. People in the church can grasp for meaning in all the wrong places. Having the right building or the right style of worship becomes the driving force, rather than unique and authentic expression. In this sense, a church can lose sight of its identity, its vision. A church like this, when it is not pursuing peak growth, has lost clarity around its vision and might follow the next best idea that anyone in the church has. Following a distinctively pure or authentic path is the process by which the church will grow: deeper, wider, stronger.

²³ John Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Ravenio Books: Cambridge, 2012), 102.

When peak growth is the goal, growth and how it is measured is reevaluated. Church metrics matter a great deal, as they communicate positive movement in the church. Though signs of growth are important, it can never be only about the numbers. It does not mean that numbers do not matter, they just do not always tell the full story. A church experiencing peak growth may even see a different kind of growth than typically evaluated. A peak growth emphasis means recording the right kind of numbers. It may not only be the worship attendance, but the number of children enrolled in the church preschool. It may not only be the financial stewardship results, but the number of hours served at the homeless shelter. Peak growth is telling the full story of what can be measured in the church. Tracking attendance for worship and giving are essential, but those metrics cannot be the only goals of peak growth. Growth takes place, across the church, as a result of purity, as part of the overflow of God's vision.

Craig Barnes is the president of Princeton Seminary. When I was installed as the senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton in the fall of 2017, he came to preach my installation service. Prior to the service, I had the chance to sit down with him and talk about church growth. On the topic of growing the church, he relayed the significance of preaching in the process. Barnes said, "I never served a church that was not growing and I believe it was because preaching was the priority."²⁴ In relaying how he kept preaching and vision-casting at the forefront of his ministry, Barnes was not bragging about leading churches that thrived, rather he was pointing to the impact that preaching can have on the growth of the church, when it stays atop the pastor's priority list. Preaching is an essential aspect of peak growth.

As related to the visioning process, once the vision was laid out, the work would begin to strategize around it in order to allow peak growth to unfold. The vision could not simply be

²⁴ Craig Barnes, personal interview, October 1, 2017.

something that remained on the website or the walls, but would need to be integrated into the church. God willing, the church community itself would be built up around the vision. The willingness of the church to embrace the vision would be the pathway to peak growth. Through prayer, fellowship, and worship, the church could welcome God to work and bring about increased vitality. If the vision was compelling, the goal would be to see its impact across the church, through engagement, participation, worship attendance, giving, and other key metrics that the church evaluates. Certainly, the hope would be for people to feel that the vision provided a direction for future ministry.

Part IV: Methodology

Visioning Process

In the second half of my first year on staff at First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton, the visioning process began in an informal way. It first and foremost began with prayer, as most worthy endeavors do. I began the year with the prayer: *Lord, what direction would you have us go as a church?* After a relatively short time, the answer came simply, in one word: *community*. Community would be the focus for the year that followed. It was a time to come together as a church community, to unite together and discern a vision. I would encourage the church community to ask the same question, about where God was leading us, so that the Holy Spirit might work through each member of the church collectively.

We also organized a series of fellowship gatherings called Community Dinners. People throughout the church were invited to dinners where they could meet the pastor and share a sense of community together. We held 10 dinners in total, ranging from 8-20 people each time. These informal settings were ideal situations to begin vision conversations. At each gatherings, I posed three questions to the group:

- What is your best memory of the church?
- What is your greatest hope for the future of the church?
- What should the pastor search team have been sure to tell me about the church?

For the people who shared, best memories of the church included the baptism of children and worship on Christmas Eve among other highlights. For the greatest hope that people had for the future of the church, the most common response was that the church would grow in number and impact. Understandably, this sentiment makes sense after enduring many years of decline in the church. There were fewer responses to what the pastor search team should have been sure to communicate to me, but people did talk about the importance of knowing the history of the church. My primary intent in posing these questions was to get people talking and reflecting on the church. This was a kind of warm up phase to allow the visioning process to unfold.

Once the community dinners concluded, plans were made for a congregational survey. The survey was comprised of 34 questions, designed to assess the current ministries and probe the identity of the church for use in the visioning process. There were a variety of question styles including multiple choice, short answers, and rating on a scale. There was relatively high participation in the survey. The survey was emailed to 550 email addresses and we received 294 respondents, resulting in a 53% participation rate.²⁵ Interestingly, the number of respondents corresponds closely to the church's regular worship attendance.

Two months after the release of the survey, the results were presented during an all-church gathering. The gathering itself was attended by over 100 people and brought a great sense of anticipation. Our online survey tool allows the ability to create word clouds for individual questions for the survey as a whole in order to visually see the words that were used most

²⁵ We celebrated this response as according to Bryan Sanzotti of Integrated Marketing Solutions who helped to guide the visioning process, the industry standard for internal surveys is between 30 and 40 percent.

frequently. Of all the responses, the most surprising result was that the word most frequently mentioned was *community*. The surprise came as the word *community* mirrored the word or theme that began the process earlier in the year. It was the same word that was revealed by God in a prayerful moment. Other highlights included:

- Oldest member joined the church in 1962; newest member joined in 2018.
- 86% of people felt it is either important or extremely important for the church to grow numerically.
- In order to grow, the church should focus on: families, community, and service.
- The most important things we do as a church are: mission, community, worship.
- If we could be known for one thing in the community it would be: community, welcoming, or caring.

Church Unique is built around the concept of a *vision frame*. The frame consists of four key sides: 1) Mission as missional mandate; 2) Values as missional motives; 3) Strategy as missional map; 4) Measures as missional life marks. Throughout the Church Unique process, a church's distinctive identity is found through a process of reflection and discovery. The work that lay ahead was to begin to construct each side of the vision frame.

There are two primary leadership groups within First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton, the staff and elders. After the survey, vision retreats were held for both the staff and elders. Based on the Church Unique process, the goal of each retreat was to seek to discover our *Kingdom Concept*. The Kingdom Concept answers the question: *How does the church glorify God and make disciples?* It is the operating system that is always at work behind the scenes of the church's ministry. Through various reflection exercises, we gathered numerous responses to that question. From each retreat, there were input lists from each group that would help inform

the first formal step of the visioning process. Several common themes emerged from the vision retreats:

- At the center of the church's identity is the concept of family, notably expressed as the church was built around what was once a home.
- The history of the church and its formation was important to many leaders.
- The church was involved in founding several local mission organizations and other churches.
- The support of thriving youth and children's ministries is part of the legacy of the church.

Following the retreats, I assembled an eight-person vision team to begin the work of refining the results of the congregational survey and vision retreats as well as articulating the vision itself. The team included both staff and church members. Using the *Church Unique* blueprint, the team met weekly over five months to distill the vision. Each aspect of the vision frame took several weeks to refine. The articulation of the vision took place during silent reflection, whiteboard sessions, and individual drafts of statements and concepts. Inevitably, when a new phrase or idea was shared, the vision team was able to strengthen it collectively. The group processing aspect of the work brought greater clarity to the vision.

The most time intensive part of the process was the first step, defining the Kingdom Concept. Even though it would only ever be known to the vision team, as was expected in the Church Unique process, the Kingdom Concept would guide all the work that would follow. The team used both the congregational survey results and input lists from the vision retreats to build the Kingdom Concept. During the process a few realizations became clear. Our Concept should reflect that:

- We are a neighborhood church.

- In order to grow as a church we must reach out to our neighbors.
- We desire to increasingly become a church for the community.

The culmination of the Kingdom Concept was defined as: At First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton, we glorify God and make disciples by...*welcoming and supporting neighbors into our church family to serve the community*. Following the direction of Church Unique, the fact that this statement would not be published and instead function as an internal guide post, alleviated any pressure to make it an exact distillation of our church right out of the gate. A lot is said in those words and we realized that the published parts of the vision would need to be expressed with even more memorable and motivating language. That said, the team felt the defined Kingdom Concept appropriately captured the spirit and identity of the congregation.

The next and most significant part of the vision frame was articulating the Mission Mandate or mission statement. This Mandate would help answer the question: *What should we ultimately be doing as a church?* This statement would be the most prominent and public aspect of the vision. After many rough drafts and revisions, the team articulated what would become the banner statement: *Inviting all generations into a growing life with Jesus Christ*. Motivated by the fact that Jesus' first act in his public ministry was to call or invite disciples, *inviting* is an action-oriented direction that sums up the mission in one word. As was reflected in the congregation survey and vision retreats, the members of the church want to foster an *all generations* approach to ministry. In every aspect, from spiritual life to worship participation, the church wants to be *growing*. For the Mandate language, the focus is on a *growing life with Jesus Christ*, as that is the bedrock of any meaningful growth.

With the Mission Mandate in place, the team began work on the Missional Motives or values. The Motives answer the question: *Why are we doing what we are doing?* During the

process, it was challenging to gain consensus on the phrasing and number of values. On several occasions, everyone would be in agreement on the idea for the value, but disagree on the actual words being used. After weeks of reflection and debate, the team landed on four values:

Abundant Compassion, Intentional Growth, Joyful Generosity, and Devoted Community.

As the vision frame continued to take shape, the next question to answer was: *How are we doing what we are doing?* This step involved identifying our Missional Map or strategy. The vision team constructed a four-part Map, with each area representing a point of focus. The Map includes: *invite, worship, grow, and serve*. After reviewing more creative language choices, the team decided on simplicity in stating each part of the strategy directly. The Map follows a pattern for how someone can follow the path that the vision lays out through the ministries of the church. Going forward, the ministries of the church will be guided by the Missional Map and be evaluated as to whether they fit into one of the strategic areas.

After thinking about vision on a broad scale, it was time to think individually. The Missional Life Marks answer the question: *How do we know when we are successful?* The Life Marks bear witness to the church's vision as they are expressed in the life of an individual member. The Life Marks are a way to measure the vision, in a variety of areas. The vision team articulated five Life Marks: loving actions, authentic relationships, unceasing prayer, studying scripture, and sharing gifts. Each of these Life Marks shape a growing life with Jesus Christ. When each of these Marks is present, someone can be living on mission and in sync with the vision of the church. Loving actions are displayed on a regular basis. Authentic relationships are formed in an ongoing way. Unceasing prayer becomes a way of life. Studying scripture is the primary disciple-making discipline. Sharing gifts of time, talents, and resources encourage a life of generosity.

The formal visioning process took the shape of a funnel. The initial intake of information was wide and it slowly narrowed. The widest point was the congregational survey, open to every member and regular-attender in the church. The vision retreats narrowed the focus to medium-sized groups. The vision team focused even further as a smaller group and did the heavy lifting of prayerfully articulating the vision. As the vision process narrowed to me as the primary vision-caster, I took the vision into the pulpit. It was my privilege and honor to be the first person to share the vision publically, to preach the vision.

Preaching the Vision

To kick off the fall of 2018, I began a seven-week preaching series called *Generations: A vision for the future*. This series would cast the vision for the congregation. Prior to the series, only the vision team, staff, and elders were aware of the fully articulated vision. There was a sermon on the Mission Mandate, sermons on each of the four Missional Motives, a sermon on the Missional Map, and a sermon on the Missional Life Marks. Each sermon presented new content, but connect the unfolding story of the vision.

Because of the 110-year history of the church, it was important to connect the new vision with what has been present in the church from the beginning. The point is, the future of the church is not just about what is ahead, but who and what have come before. For the Mission Mandate message, I reflected back on the fact that in 1950, the church acquired the land and home around which the current campus is built. On May 9, 1954, the church cornerstone was laid for the sanctuary, in which worship now takes place. During the ceremony, when the cornerstone was set, several documents were placed inside including the membership role, the last Easter sermon preached in the old building, and the church calendar for May 9. The faith of the generations who had come before were present where the church still gathers to worship

God. Christ has always been the cornerstone of First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton. In keeping with the history of the church, Jesus Christ is the foundation of the new mission statement.

It was significant to me as the preacher and vision-caster to link where we were going to where we had been. Preaching the history was intentional and appreciated, especially by the older generations in the church. Connecting to the people and ministries that had come before the current generation added credibility to the language of a new vision as the church would begin to embrace a new lexicon for vision.

As the preaching series unfolded, I intentionally used more recent examples of church history, not just the founding stories of the church. Several years ago, when the church celebrated its 100-year centennial, there were significant markers throughout the church. The deacons organized a blood drive to collect 100 units of blood, the children of the church organized 100 toiletry kits for the homeless, the mission team gathered 100 children's books for a downtown Chicago Christian daycare. The point of using more recent illustrations is that the history of the church is continuing to unfold. The next chapter of the church is continuing to be written. In one sermon in particular on the value of Joyful Generosity, I shared the church history book that was created for the centennial. As I opened the book to those gathered in the church, I asked the question: *What history will be written about our generation when the next book is written?* My hope was to encourage the church to think about the legacy of our vision.

In an effort to encourage people to embody the mission, I gave the church members three action steps, three things they could do to carry the mission forward. I invited everyone to: *Pray* for the mission daily; *Participate* in the mission by getting involved; *Pass* the mission on, that it

might echo in the halls and homes wherever people are gathered. The power of the vision would come as it is fully embodied.

The prolific preacher and professor Fred Craddock wrote, “One does well as a storyteller when reaching the point wherein the story carries the gospel, like a seed carries its future in its own bosom.”²⁶ For the *Generations* sermon series to work, to really resonate with the congregation, it had to tell the story of the vision. The vision could not simply be handed over or sent in an email, it had to be presented as a story, a story that has its roots in the gospel. Preaching the vision itself had to tell a story, which as the preacher, I would share from the pulpit. The hope of the preaching series is that it would ignite the vision to spread within the church and beyond. Therefore, the sermons had to be memorable and compelling.

In keeping with the themes of the vision and the biblical texts, I searched the archives for stories that carried the spirit of the church. I discovered that in the early 1900s, Dr. Shepherd, one of the first pastors of the church, gathered the youth of the church to build a gymnasium in the basement of the old sanctuary because there was no place for local youth to recreate. His concern for young people and desire to see them have a safe place to enjoy fellowship help to set the tone for the ministry of future generations. In 1967, the church founded the first preschool in the local community. The preschool met the needs of many local families who were looking for early childhood education for their children. In the 1970s the church was involved in planting two other local Presbyterian congregations. A value of *intentional growth*, as defined in our visioning process, was fostered in the church for decades. Each of these stories carry the values of the church, which characterize everything the church does.

²⁶ Fred Craddock, *Craddock on the Craft of Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2011), 24.

For vision to stick, it had to be preached alongside the biblical text. As the vision was cast, I paid particular attention to ensure that the good news of the gospel was proclaimed. The visioning work helped shape the preaching and the biblical texts helped shape each sermon in the *Generations* series. While I did not preach consistently from a particular book of the Bible, the texts I choose corresponded to each aspect of the vision. The preaching scriptures included:

- Genesis 15:1-6, God speaking to Abram through a vision.
- Romans 12:1-8, Paul writing about growing spiritually and as the church.
- James 1:17-18, James reflecting on gifts and generosity.
- Matthew 14:13-2, Jesus feeding the five thousand.
- Matthew 28:16-20, The Great Commission.
- Galatians 5:22-26, the fruit of the Spirit.

Each of these texts formed a kind of vision lectionary from the Old Testament, Gospels, and Epistles. The scriptures became foundational for each aspect of the vision. By grounding the vision in the biblical texts, the vision was not left hanging out on its own. There was a strong and firm foundation for each critical area of the vision frame. According to our Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order, “Where the Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the living Word is present by the power of the Holy Spirit...The sermon will present the gospel with clarity and simplicity, in language that all can understand.”²⁷ Much like the theology of Presbyterian preaching is that Jesus is present as the living Word, the scriptural foundation enabled preaching of the Word to cause the vision to come alive. The act of preaching our unique vision with clarity provided the catalyst to experience the peak growth the church desires.

Following each sermon, I would seek the feedback of members of the vision team, to hear how they felt a particular message held true to each aspect of the vision frame. Since the visioning process continued even after the *Generations* series began, there was ample opportunity for feedback and reflection. These conversations were both informal, while sharing a

²⁷ *Book of Order: 2017-2019* (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 2017) 90.

cup of coffee with someone, and more formal, by asking specific questions by email or in person. The discussion about each sermon helped to strengthen and shape the preaching of the vision. It also provided a compass for ensuring that interpreting the vision for the people through preaching was authentic to the vision as it was intended and crafted.

Part V: CONCLUSION

In keeping with the thesis for this project, that *preaching the church's unique vision is the catalyst for the church's peak growth*, in the months since going public with the vision, several key results have supported the impact that the vision has had within the congregation. In light of the thesis of this project, I learned what can happen when a church moves from being *vision-starved* to *vision-focused*. As we move forward, I am encouraged as I continue to see people coming back to the vision to plan the ministry of the church, whether it is in how a service day is planned or deciding to use fair trade coffee for fellowship.

Outcomes

Inspired by the new vision, our Director of Music organized a Community Concert Series for the year. The concert series expresses how the music ministry is inviting all generations into a growing life with Jesus Christ. The series began in the fall following the launch of the vision and received significant support. The first concert featured a 50-musician orchestra and drew several hundred people from the community. The highlight of the concert series so far was the Lessons and Carols service, featuring an all-generations ensemble of adult and children's choirs, orchestra, and worship band. It was truly a multi-generational experience. The services were attended by 578 people, as many as had come in eight years.

During the fall, we also launched a new Community Art Gallery in keeping with the *invitational* theme of the vision. The goal of the gallery is to invite people to grow in their faith

through the visual arts. The gallery will feature work by artists who are church or community members. Following a few fall exhibits, at the end of the year we hosted calligrapher Timothy Botts, a well-known local artist. In addition to offering an installation of his artwork called “Messiah” during Advent, we also commissioned him to paint a new mural that contained the mission statement. On the day the Messiah installation opened, the artist was present for the unveiling of the new mural. The new canvas replaced an old mural that had a familiar welcome slogan on it. The location of the mural is significant because it is the first thing that anyone sees when they come through the main entrance of the church. The new mission is now boldly and beautifully proclaimed on a large canvas for all to see.

Along with the excitement of a new vision, there are other reasons to celebrate as the vision has helped increase several key measurable metrics within the church. Worship attendance has increased steadily from the time the vision launch took place. In comparing September-December 2015 to the same time frame in 2018, worship attendance has increased 12%. People are coming back to worship who have not attended in some time and we are seeing guests come most every week.

Generosity has accelerated in a similar way. In the fall of 2018 we hosted Kevin Garvey, Senior Vice President of the Presbyterian Foundation. When I interviewed Kevin about what motivates people to give he said, “People don’t give to a budget, they give to a vision.”²⁸ Since the launch of the vision, compared to the prior year, overall giving has increased 3% or \$25,682, and the average pledge has increased 5% or \$195.

As the vision unfolded, a spirit of renewal has filled our worship. In 2018, we saw 4 adult and 21 baptisms, a number which the church had not seen in twelve years. The all-generations

²⁸ Kevin Garvey, personal interview, September 17, 2018.

theme of the vision became realized has the youngest members of our church were baptized in worship. The sacramental culmination of our vision realized in worship is a powerful factor in the progress of the church.

The vision work is still unfolding. At the Annual Meeting of the congregation in January 2019, a new logo was revealed to visually communicate the vision of the church. In the process of building the logo, the goal was to incorporate the existing church architecture and themes of the vision. With a circular shape and interconnecting lines that form a cross, the logo pays homage to two architectural features that are prominently located on the sanctuary, a round Celtic cross atop the steeple and a circular window with interlaced lines across it.²⁹

Ongoing Vision Work

One of the next steps, now that the vision is in place, is to assemble a Staff Design Team, to evaluate our staffing model. Our current staff arrangement is perfectly suited to support the church when there was no vision, but in order to see the vision fully realized, the critical next phase is to align the staff structure with the vision framework. The Staff Design Team will likely include a few members who were part of the Vision Team, but also new leaders within the church who can provide a fresh perspective.

In a conversation, with Ed Setzer, Wheaton College professor, and Director of the Billy Graham Center, he talked about the practical aspects of preaching for vision casting. Setzer explained, “You may find that you also need to cast a vision for practical things, like having enough parking spaces. Preaching that causes the church to grow will require practical reinforcement.”³⁰ Certainly, adding parking spaces would be a problem worth having at any church, but his point of paying attention to practical aspects of church life and ministry is crucial.

²⁹ See Appendix 4 for church logo.

³⁰ Ed Setzer, personal interview, May 8, 2018.

The church cannot live into its potential or fully embrace a vision if there are practical limitations. The vision will need continual practical reinforcement.

Once our formal visioning process concluded, I had the chance to speak with Will Mancini, whose book *Church Unique* was the blueprint for our process. Mancini relayed to me that once the vision has a chance to settle in, it should result in growth within the church. He offered caution though, saying that after an initial bump of enthusiasm, if growth within the church flattens out or reverses, “more dramatic preaching and visioning is required.”³¹ My take away from that conversation was, that if progress does not continue at some point, the vision needs to be re-focused.

In review, there were moments where I faced pushback from members in the church about certain aspects of the vision that they did not care for. In looking back, I was not always prepared to receive feedback that was not positive, when for example someone did not care for the wording and style of our new mission mural. On the day we unveiled the mural, someone let me know they did not care for the new words and way it was visually communicated. They preferred the previous mural and wording. While requiring patience and perspective at the time, this kind of feedback helped the process of reflection going forward. If I were to lead this process again, I would also not want to feel limited by time and there were occasions when I felt some pressure that we had to complete our work by a certain date. My takeaway is that lasting vision work cannot be rushed or forced.

After all is said and done, we have received the vision that God has placed before us, the vision has been preached and plans are in place for activating the vision within the congregation. As the process continues, I am reminded that the vision will need to be kept continually before

³¹ Will Mancini, personal interview, September 17, 2018.


the people. Not in a way that is forced or contrived, but preaching will need to continue to call the vision forth. I anticipate regular opportunities where I will revisit the vision during a sermon or series. While there may be growing pains along the way, as the vision guides the church forward like a directional compass, the path of promise and potential-fulfilling ministry awaits.

Appendix 1


Google

Rating ▾ Hours ▾


First Presbyterian Church of Wheaton
5.0 ★★★★★ (10) · Presbyterian Church
715 N Carlton St




Church of the Resurrection
4.9 ★★★★★ (16) · Church
935 W Union Ave




Gary United Methodist Church
5.0 ★★★★★ (5) · Church
224 N Main St




Willow Creek Wheaton Ministry Center
4.0 ★★★★★ (3) · Church
315 W Front St

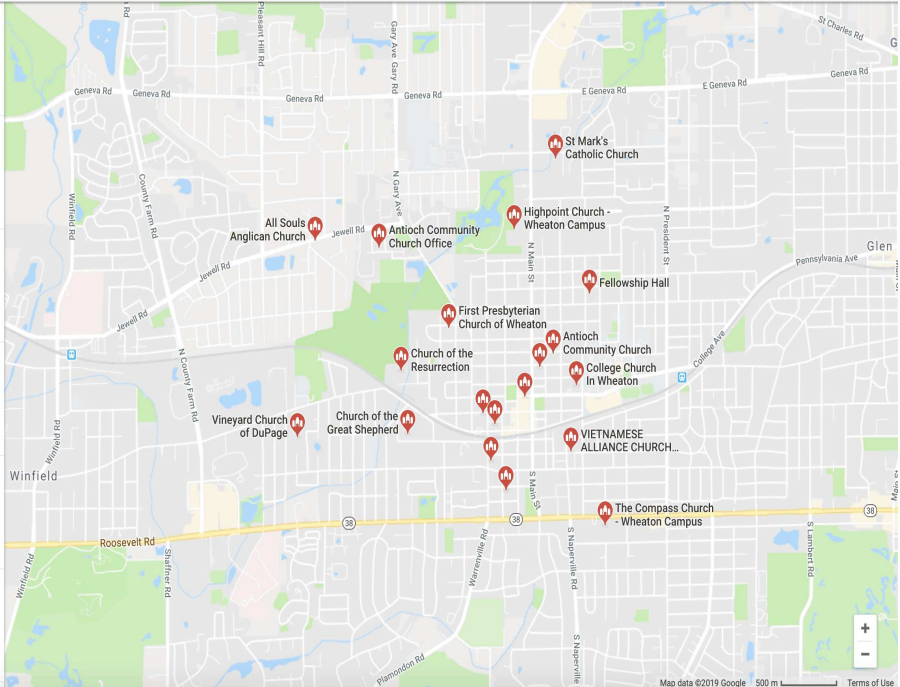


ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
No reviews · Lutheran Church
410 N Cross St



Trinity Episcopal Church
4.2 ★★★★★ (5) · Episcopal Church
130 N West St





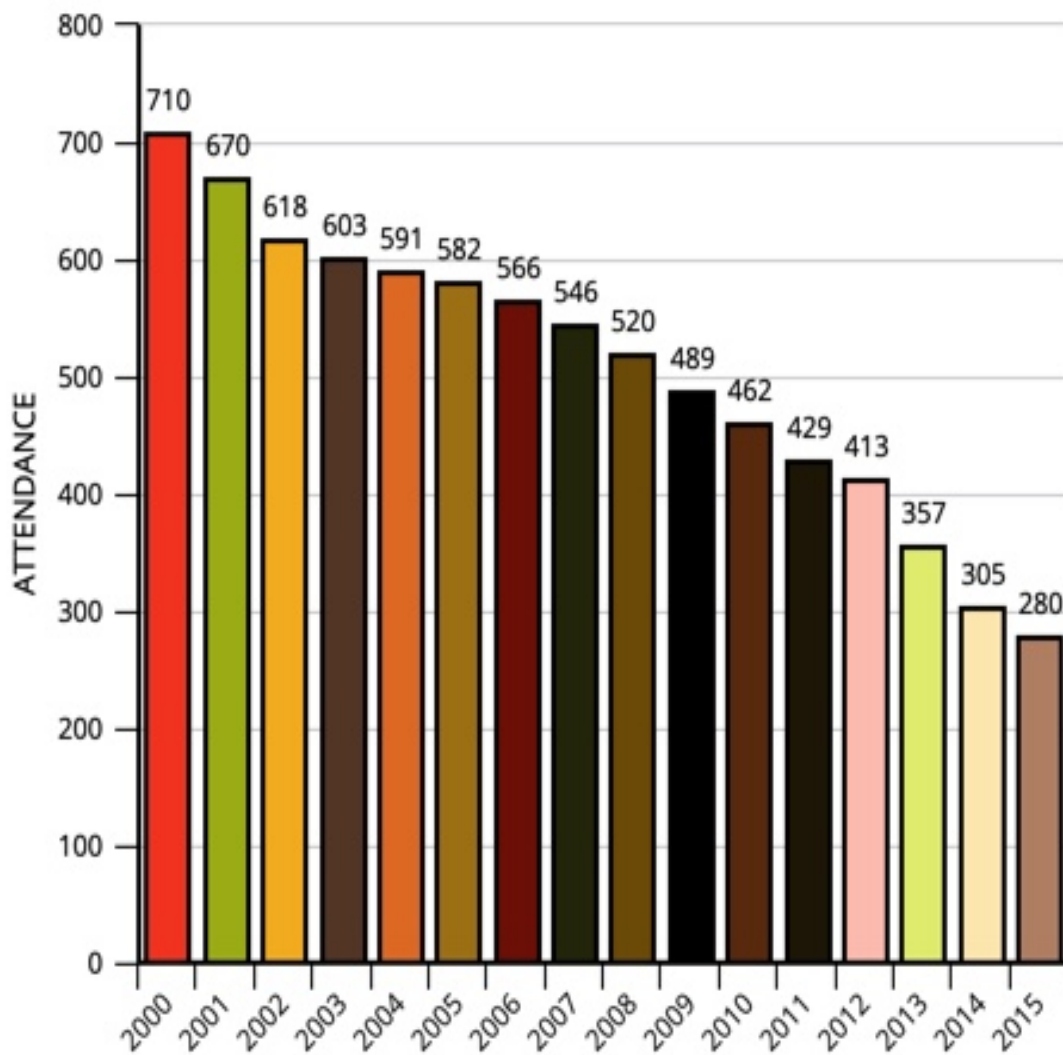
Map data ©2019 Google 500 m Terms of Use

Appendix 2

Year At A Glance: Membership Diversity				
February 25, 2019				
Gender Diversity	2017	2016	Change	% Change
Total Members	1013	1036	-23	-2 %
Female Members	638	642	-4	-1 %
Male Members	375	394	-176	-31 %
Racial Ethnic Diversity	2017	2016	Change	% Change
African	0	0	0	0 %
African-American	0	0	0	0 %
Asian	4	3	1	33 %
Black	1	0	1	0 %
Hispanic	3	2	1	50 %
Middle Eastern	0	1	-1	-100 %
Native American	1	0	1	0 %
White	1004	1030	-26	-3 %
Other	0	0	0	0 %
Total	1013	1036	-23	-2 %
Diversity by Age	2017	2016	Change	% Change
Age 25 and Under	141	271	-130	-48 %
Age 26 to 45	182	152	30	20 %
Age 46 to 55	231	184	47	26 %
Age 56 to 65	239	177	62	35 %
Over Age 65	220	252	-32	-13 %

Appendix 3

Average Worship Attendance



Appendix 4



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