

VILLAGE CHURCH OF BARRINGTON

Our Plan for Ministry

2012 – 2017

July 2012

1600 EAST MAIN STREET – BARRINGTON, ILLINOIS 60010

Introduction

*‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’*

—Matthew 28:19-20a

‘... I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’

—Matthew 16:18

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been commissioned with a task. Our Lord does not want us to keep the Good News to ourselves, but rather to share it with the world! He is in the process of building his church, and we have the privilege of partnering with him in that task.

This task is not only for us as individuals, but also for us collectively as a local church. Just as it is important for each of us to be intentional with our own spiritual transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit, so also the elders of Village Church want to be good stewards of all that God has given to us as a *family* of believers. We want to be in step with his call for the Church. This means striving together to fulfill the Great Commission.

What we see in the Great Commission is that Jesus grows his church both quantitatively and qualitatively. It grows quantitatively as new converts profess Christ as Lord and Savior: *‘And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved’* (Acts 2:47). It grows qualitatively as believers are strengthened and conformed to the image of Christ: *‘Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ’* (Colossians 1:28). So both evangelism and edification are necessary for the ongoing health of the church. Both activities glorify God. It is in the spirit of the Great Commission, then, that we present this strategic plan for the Village Church of Barrington.

Now with any strategic plan there is the possibility of planning in the flesh. So we have endeavored to seek God’s will through prayer, the study of Scripture, and the fellowship of believers. We recognize that this plan will only succeed through faithful dependence upon God and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We also acknowledge that the Holy Spirit may direct us down different paths in the future, and we want to be submissive to his leading. Nevertheless, we are delighted to have the sense of focus that comes from a strategic plan such as this one. May it result in significant fruit for the kingdom of Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria!

The Elders of the Village Church of Barrington

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VCB Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Equipping believers to impact their world for Christ.

Vision

We want to be a family of believers where God can apply His Word to mobilize Christ-followers to boldly share the good news of Jesus Christ, to care for one another, and to serve the body of Christ, the local area and the world. We desire to reproduce this family of believers in other areas where no such church exists.

Values

We undertake our mission with the following values:

- Love for God, the lost and one another
- Worship that is Christ-exalting and theologically rich
- A humble dependence upon God in prayer
- Faithful proclamation of the Word of God
- Intergenerational ministry
- Intentional Sanctification

Biblical Paradigm

We take our strategy from the founding of the church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30). This was the first church planted by the “mother church” in Jerusalem. It was a vibrant family of believers that sent out missionaries to preach the Gospel and to plant churches all over the world. Our plan is to glorify God by following essentially the same process that they did:

1. **Evangelize Nonbelievers:** *‘Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord’* (Acts 11:19-21). The first priority of the believers at Antioch was to evangelize nonbelievers. Likewise, Jesus calls us to be his witnesses in the world, and to make disciples. We will share the Gospel within our various spheres of influence, so that the Holy Spirit will bring new believers into the church.
2. **Establish Community:** *‘The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord’* (Acts 11:22-24; cp. 2:42-47). Once these new believers had professed faith in Christ, they needed to form relationships with others who followed Christ—especially those who were more mature in the faith. This would encourage them to remain faithful to the Lord. Likewise, we want VCB to be a welcoming family marked by close fellowship among believers. We will utilize home small groups as the primary means to establish community.
3. **Equip Believers:** *‘So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians’* (Acts 11:25-26). Once the church had experienced quantitative growth, they needed some qualitative growth. The leadership of the church poured themselves into helping believers grow into Christ’s likeness. Likewise, we will work in concert with the Holy Spirit to disciple the people of VCB by providing the knowledge and fostering the experiences that produce mature believers.
4. **Empower Servants:** *‘Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world. . . . So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul’* (Acts 11:27-30). Once the

believers at Antioch were mature and equipped, they began to see outside of themselves. They looked for practical ways to bless others. Likewise, through service and outreach, we will represent Christ in our local community and around the world.

In these four steps, we see the lifecycle of a church: bring them in, get them grounded, train them up, and send them out. This is the way a healthy church fulfills the Great Commission. As long as our church is faithful with these four crucial functions, it will continue to remain a vital body of believers for the glory of Jesus Christ.

In the section that follows, we go through each of these four areas in greater detail. The elders have endeavored to remain at a high level of planning (vision and strategy), leaving room for the pastors and ministry team leaders to devise specific goals and objectives for their respective areas. Nevertheless, in some cases, we do enumerate specific action items, particularly in those areas that were judged to be among the weakest of our church.

A special note regarding younger believers, especially children—they are included in this plan at every level. More often than not, when we use the word *church*, we are not just referring to adults believers but rather to *all* believers, young and old alike. Now in some areas, what happens in adult ministry will look different from what happens in children's ministry (e.g. missions trips). It will be up to the leaders in the children's and youth ministries to translate this plan and adapt it to their respective contexts.

The Strategic Plan

I. Evangelize Nonbelievers

The elders have identified this function as perhaps the most glaring weakness of VCB. The 2011 ministry evaluations revealed that only a handful of people came to faith in Christ *in* or *through* our church last year. While our church has grown numerically, most of that growth has been transfer growth, which means that we are merely moving Christians around from one local church to another rather than taking new ground. While we praise the Lord for those who were saved, we also realize that—for a church our size—we should be seeing more conversions. Everyone in our congregation needs to evangelize their various spheres of influence.

Another factor affecting VCB is our aging congregation. Our average weekly attendance was in decline during the five-year period from 2005 to 2010. The focus of the members was largely inward. A 2011 demographical analysis revealed that the average age for an adult in our church was 55 years old. Adding the twenty-, thirty- and forty-somethings together equaled the number of people in their fifties. Most of these had been believers for many years; there were few new believers. If VCB is going to remain a vital witness for Christ in Barrington for the next generation, that imbalance needs to be addressed. So the elders plan to tackle this problem by the following strategies:

A. Communicate a renewed emphasis upon evangelism.

1. Preach through the book of Acts from the pulpit. Highlight repeatedly the bold proclamation of the early believers as an example and inspiration for us today (2012-2013).
2. Call the church both individually and corporately to pray for the lost, so that we might develop a heart for them and also recognize those whom God might be calling to himself (2012-13).
3. Offer practical courses in the Equipping Center on how to share the Gospel with family, friends, neighbors and co-workers (2012-2013). Train 20% of the congregation for evangelism in each of the next five years.
4. Change the definition of “success” from actual conversions to faithful proclamation, regardless of the nonbeliever’s response. Define God’s role in the conversion process, along with man’s responsibility.
5. Add a section on evangelism to the annual performance review of the ministry staff. Knowing that they will be held accountable in this area should help the pastors and directors lead the way for the rest of the congregation.

6. Make much of baptisms and salvation testimonies. They will be the primary indicator of fruitfulness in this area. Hearing how people from our church led others to Christ will also encourage others to be more faithful in evangelism.
 7. Survey the congregation to find out what percentage of our people were saved in or through the ministry of VCB, and what percentage were saved elsewhere. We can also determine what percentage of people who attend are not yet saved.
- B. Develop a comprehensive plan for reaching the children and youth of our church who do not yet know Christ.
1. Assess the extent to which the Gospel is already being presented clearly to children and youth in their various programs, and then determine the effectiveness of those presentations.
 2. Schedule certain times in the ministry cycle when the Gospel is presented, including an opportunity for children and youth to respond.
 3. Explore whether we might use a form of catechism/confirmation as part of the “rites of passage.”
 4. Celebrate the conversion of children publicly in the services by using a cross as a symbol that a child professed faith in Christ (teens will continue to publicly profess their allegiance to Christ in baptism).
- C. Develop a strategy to reach the unchurched, particularly singles, younger married couples and single parents, all of whom are underrepresented in our congregation.
1. Begin a Saturday night service with a different vibe than that of the Sunday morning services, in order to appeal to a younger demographic (Started).
 2. The communications team will devise and launch initiatives to reach new households within a five-mile radius of the church (2012-15).
 3. Appoint a Director of Single Adult Ministry to begin a ministry for singles (Started). Examine how that ministry might minister to the special needs of single parents.
 4. Appoint a Children & Family Ministry Director who will revitalize that ministry, making it a place where parents can be confident that their children are being nurtured in the Lord (In Place).
 - a. Focus on those ministries that reach out to young families, especially those with previous success (e.g. MOPS, AWANA, Entrusted Heart). Provide them with additional resources, if necessary.
 - b. Improve security in the children’s ministry area.
 - c. Renovate classrooms that need it, including painting and the replacing of worn out equipment (e.g. white boards).
 5. Revise the front end of the assimilation ministry to make newcomers feel welcome, including greeters, hospitality bags, first-time visitor letters, regular

attender letters, newcomers' receptions, membership classes, etc. (In Place). See the second point, "Establish Community," for more details.

6. Reach out to the various groups that use our building (e.g. men's basketball, Fox Point, Suzuki, PTO, weddings, etc.). Do a better job of being Christ's ambassadors to them.
7. Continue offering practical courses on marriage and parenting to the community. Do these offsite in more neutral locations, such as the library. Tactfully notify attendees about our church.
8. Discuss how we are going to handle additional growth in the fall. Consider reviving The Gathering during the 11:00 service, only in the gym.
9. Make sure that all new converts get plugged into the church community and get disciplined (see point two, "Establish Community," below).

D. Renovate the building in order to make it more welcoming for newcomers.

1. Hire an architect to analyze our building and create a master plan for maximizing usage (2012).
2. Hire a designer to improve the look of the interior, especially the oldest parts of the building.
3. Find a way to straighten the path from the parking lot to the worship center.
4. Improve the north lobby entrance.
5. Create a better space for fellowship.
6. Remodel the bathrooms and the nursery on the children's level to make them more appealing to mothers of young children.

E. Begin planting autonomous churches. We include this here rather than under the fourth point, "Empower Servants," because planting churches is one of the most effective tools for reaching new people Christ. One denomination found that 80 percent of the new converts in their denomination were saved in churches that were less than three years old. This is because new churches are often more outwardly focused than established churches. An emphasis on church planting is also in keeping with the mission statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America: "We exist to glorify God by multiplying healthy churches among all people." Thus, by God's grace, we will endeavor to do the following:

1. Develop a high-level strategy for multiplying churches, both at home and abroad (2012-13).
 - a. Determine what areas in the Chicagoland area need a new church (completed). Prioritize them according to proximity and need.
 - b. Look for opportunities to plant churches in other parts of the country.
 - c. Plant a church in the Nyanza province of Kenya to serve as the spiritual anchor for our humanitarian work there.
 - d. Pray that God would allow us to plant a church among an unreached people group (see "F" below).

2. Gain support for the new church plant among church leaders and congregation (2012-13).
 - a. Talk about church planting at every elder, deacon and congregational meeting, and periodically in staff meeting.
 - b. Mention church planting from the pulpit periodically.
 - c. Bring in EFCA leaders to highlight the importance of church planting.

3. Prepare for the first church plant (2012-14).
 - a. Select the church planter (completed).
 - b. Establish a timeline (completed).
 - c. Finalize the target community (2012-13).
 - d. Determine the budget and other matters related to finances (2012-13).
 - e. Develop a curriculum for prospective church planters (2012-13).
 - f. Church planter completes an eight-month residency on staff at VCB, being mentored by the Senior Pastor (2013-14).
 - g. Build the core group (2013-14). Once a household commits to being part of the core group, they will start directing their tithes to the new church.
 - h. Network with other Evangelical Free churches in the area to see if they want to partner with us in the new plant (2013-14).
 - i. Incorporate the new church (2013-14).
 - j. Responsibilities delegated (2014).
 - k. Select site (Spring 2014).
 - l. Purchase equipment (Summer 2014).
 - m. Advertise in the target community (Summer 2014).
 - n. Launch the church (Fall 2014).
 - o. New church prepares to plant a daughter church of its own (2014-19).

4. Establish an ongoing program for planting churches.
 - a. Write VCB church planting policies and guidelines (2014).
 - b. Begin the process of planting a second church (Spring 2015).
 - c. Develop a relationship with Trinity to identify potential church planters. Perhaps bring them on as interns or part-time staff members before sending them out to plant.
 - d. Free up schedule of Senior Pastor to make training church planters a priority. Evaluate whether a part-time person should be hired.
 - e. Support the Great Lakes District of the EFCA in their church planting efforts. Coordinate with denominational leadership and local senior pastors to strategize how best to reach the Chicagoland area. Perhaps we could join together to fund a centralized trainer.

- F. Grow our global reach. Jesus said, *'make disciples of all nations'* (Matthew 28:19). He also told the disciples, *'But you will receive power when the Holy*

Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8). The early church took the Gospel of Christ to the whole world. We should as well.

1. Intentionally increase the budget for global missions.
2. Increase the profile of global missions in the congregation by highlighting it regularly from the pulpit and by cooperating with EFCA REACH Global.
3. Offer the course, "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement," in order to educate our people more about missions.
4. Encourage the people of our congregation to engage personally in missions, both short-term and long-term.
 - a. Develop training program that prepares people for cross-cultural work.
 - b. Have them gain experience in cross-cultural situations here in Chicagoland before going abroad.
 - c. Send teams to help our current missionaries, as well as to venture into new areas that might be fruitful.
5. Partner with like-minded EFCA churches to adopt an unreached people group in the "10/40 Window" and work to begin a church-planting movement there. Send representatives to the next "Call2All" event (2012-13).
6. Work with indigenous nationals to reach various people groups. Recruit foreign nationals who are currently studying at Trinity but eventually plan to return home. Perhaps we could sponsor one or more.
7. Evaluate all current missionaries to determine their alignment with our vision and also their fruitfulness. This will be accomplished by sending out our pastors, elders and/or members of the Global Impact Team to visit all of our current missionaries in the field over the next five years (2012-17).
8. Continue the Kenyan program for community transformation in Nyanza province by meeting both the physical and educational needs. Strengthen the pastoral leadership among the local churches there to aid in spiritual transformation as well. Consider sending a fulltime missionary to serve (2012-2015).

II. Establish Community

We want to be what Larry Osborne calls a "sticky church." As soon as someone within our circles of influence professes faith in Christ, we need to assimilate that person into the Christian community of VCB. Here they will receive the needed indoctrination, fellowship, care, accountability and encouragement from other believers, especially those who are more mature (see Acts 2:42-47). While the weekend services provide some measure of community, the primary way in which community will be established at VCB is through home small groups. It is in this context that newer believers will forge deep, lasting relationships with other

believers. Here they will practice the “one anothers” of the New Testament. Thus, we plan to do the following:

- A. Continue to strive for high impact weekend services. This will be the entry point for most visitors, some of whom may not yet be believers. It is also the highest attended event each week for our members and regular attenders, some of whom may not yet be in small group groups. So we need to ensure that everyone in our body is regularly participating in the corporate spiritual disciplines that take place during our worship services, such as: worship, prayer, Scripture intake, fellowship and service. While services will be geared toward believers, we must always be mindful that there may be unbelievers present.
 1. Continue blessing the heart of the Triune God through worship that is both theological rich and relevant.
 2. Faithfully communicate the ‘*whole counsel of God*’ through bold, biblical preaching, while taking into account the life situation of the hearers, addressing their mind, emotions and will (cf. Acts 20:20, 26-27).
 3. Reinforce baptism as the initiation rite into the Christian community. Encourage those who have not been baptized since becoming a believer to publically declare their allegiance to Jesus Christ in baptism. Provide opportunities at least three times per year in each of the services, or more frequently as the need arises.
 4. Reinforce communion as the rite of continuing in the Christian community. As a general rule, continue offering it on the first Sunday of the month.

- B. Strengthen the assimilation and retention process. In the fall of 2010, the assimilation process was broken. We had new people visiting the church, but there were few new members. To make matters worse, we were losing people. The church was in decline. While much improvement has been brought to this vital area, there is still more that can be done.
 1. Get better data from visitors, regular attenders and members.
 - a. Revise the connecting card (Sunday morning) and the connecting pad (Saturday night), and emphasize their use in the VCB News each week (In Place).
 - b. Determine who is actively involved in the church, as well as who is marginal. Determine who has come recently and who is withdrawing (In Place).
 - c. Clean up the Shelby database (completed).
 2. Offer gift bags to first-time visitors with a book, fresh-baked banana bread and information about our church (In Place).
 3. Write a first-time visitor letter, regular attender letter, four-week absence letter and eight-week absence letter. Send these out weekly, as appropriate (In Place).

4. Offer newcomer receptions about once every six weeks (In Place).
 5. Encourage visitors to become regular attenders. Encourage regular attenders to become members.(In Place)
 6. Offer membership classes three times per year (In Place).
 7. Seek to place regular attenders and members into a small group, if they are not in one already (see below).
 8. Conduct exit interviews for those who have decided to leave the church. Try to learn why they are leaving and seek to reestablish fellowship. If this is not possible, then see what VCB can learn from this departure, if anything.
 9. Train the children and youth of the church to be ambassadors, to aid in the assimilation of children, youth and parents.
 10. Consider hiring a part-time person to oversee assimilation and retention, as well as small group placement (2012-13).
- C. Reinforce the home small group ministry as an essential part of our DNA. The elders are not satisfied with the number of adults currently participating in home small groups. As of the writing of this document, our church has 318 members and 301 regular attenders—a total of 619 adults who call this church “home.” Of these, only 320 are in small groups (51.7%). If we slice the information another way, dividing the number of people in small groups by the average weekly adult attendance, the numbers are slightly better (53.8%). But the elders would still like this to be much higher.

Several factors have contributed to this percentage being lower than we would like. First, our congregation has been experiencing growth. New people are coming faster than we are placing them into groups. Second, there was a period when people were not get placed in a timely manner. Some were on a waiting list for nearly a year before they got plugged in. While this has improved of late, there is still room to grow. Third, we do not have much room for new people. Many groups are already large—some in excess of twenty people (although not everyone comes every time). We need to identify and train new leaders who can form new groups, so that those who are not currently in a small group can be assimilated. But many of the groups have been together for a long time, and those who would otherwise be qualified to lead their own group are loath to leave behind those relationships and effectively start over again. So we must:

1. Mention small groups regularly from the pulpit.
2. Establish the expectation that all members and 75 percent of regular attenders participate in a small group.
3. Identify potential small group leaders. Invite them to take part in small group leader training. Determine which of them would make good small group leaders and appoint them to the task.
4. Expand the number of small groups.
5. Streamline the process for placing new people into groups.
6. Intentionally pursue those who are not in small groups.

7. Streamline the number of programs offered at our church, so that people will be more likely to participate in a small group.

D. Clarify and simplify the VCB governance model. Our current governance structure is both convoluted and redundant. The Church Board—made up of nearly thirty pastors, elders, deacons and church officers—is too large to be effective. The role of the elders is spelled out in the Constitution, but not the role of the deacons. Several of the deacons are assigned to pastors, but not all. For instance, one pastor has two deacons, some pastors have one deacon, other pastors have no deacon, and some deacons have no pastor. It has not always been clear who has the final authority for a given ministry—the pastor or the deacon—especially since the deacon has a vote on the Church Board, and the pastor does not. This causes the pastors to work through their deacons to bring up items at the Board level. In addition, most pastors have ministry team leaders to whom they delegate duties. The relationship between the deacons and these ministry team leaders is not clear. In some cases, the deacon chairs a team, but in other cases he or she does not. The deacon serves for a specified term, while a team leader can serve in perpetuity. Another redundancy is found between the deacons and the finance team. While the deacons handle much of the business side of church ministry, we have a separate finance team that works on the budget and the like. Many of the members of that team are deacons, but some are members at large. It is not clear why we need both groups. We also need to define more clearly the roles of pastors and elders. Finally, there is some confusion among the congregation as to what is meant exactly by “congregational government.”

1. Create a five-year strategic plan (this document). This will bring a much-needed focus to our ministry efforts.
 - a. Elders create the rough draft.
 - b. Get input from the pastors, deacons and ministry team leaders (Completed).
 - c. Revise and roll out to the congregation (Summer 2012).
 - d. Each ministry will align their programs and events to the overall vision of the church.
 - e. Devise a process by which the elders can update the plan as part of a periodic ministry evaluation cycle.
2. Revise the church’s Constitution. Delineate more carefully the roles of the various leaders of the church, as well as the role of the congregation. This will allow for a clearer vision, a framework for decision-making, and a faster response to implementing change and adopting new forms, with clear lines of accountability.
 - a. The elders will appoint a Constitution Revision Team made up of two elders (the Senior Pastor and Elder Chairman), two deacons, and two members at large. They will be tasked with researching the best

practices regarding church constitutions, and then write the initial draft (2012-13).

- b. Elders, pastors and deacons will review (2013).
 - c. Present the revised Constitution to the congregation (2013). Email a PDF to each member or send a hardcopy by mail.
 - d. Hold open forums for congregational discussion, accompanied by teaching and explanation (2013).
 - e. Revise Constitution as necessary (2013).
 - f. Congregation votes on the new Constitution (2013-14).
- E. Improve communication within VCB. Leadership to develop processes of communication so that each level of VCB is receiving necessary information.
1. Ensure ministry staff is aware of pertinent elder meeting information (2012).
 2. Ensure good communication between elders and deacons (2012).
 3. Improve communication from leadership to congregation.
 4. Write policies for all the various ministries and place them on the shared drive or a secure portion of the website.
- F. Enhance member care.
1. Reinforce the idea that small groups are the primary means by which the people of our church will receive care.
 2. Create a Compassion Team to help with crisis care (In Place).
 3. Define how pastors, elders and the Compassion Team will supplement and support the small group leaders in their shepherding of the flock.
 - a. Assign several small groups to each elder (completed).
 - b. The elders will develop mentoring relationships with their small group leaders. If a small group leader is facing a difficult pastoral situation, he can appeal to his elder for assistance.
 - c. If an elder is facing a situation that requires additional wisdom, he can appeal to a pastor or another elder.
 - d. Elders will visit periodically the small groups under their care and/or provide opportunities to fellowship with their flock.
 - e. Elders will follow up with members and regular attenders who are withdrawing from the fellowship of the church and have not responded to the four- and eight-week absence letters sent by the pastoral staff.

III. Equip Believers

Once a new believer or other newcomer has put down roots into the local church, we will turn our attention toward equipping them for ministry. This will include teaching them God's Word, Christian doctrine, the spiritual disciplines, and practical Christian living. Mere knowledge is it not enough, however; it must include obedience. As

Jesus said in the Great Commission, ‘*teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you*’ (Matthew 28:20). We must be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).

The goal of our instruction is life transformation. We want to see every person who is part of VCB increasingly conformed into the image of Christ (Colossians 1:28-29; Romans 12:1-2). The pastors and elders are to serve as examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). They are not to do all of the work of the ministry themselves, but rather to equip the body to do it (Ephesians 4:11-16). As the members of the body use their spiritual gifts for the good of one another, the church will be strengthened and established in the faith (1 Corinthians 12:7).

VCB has traditionally been strong in terms of biblical content offered through the Equipping Center on Sunday and in Bible studies that meet during the week. Where we have not been as strong, perhaps, is in the application of that knowledge—moving from the head to the heart, and then eventually to the hands. We need to offer training opportunities where people can actually do the work of the ministry, gaining wisdom and skill through real-life experiences, but without sacrificing the quality of the biblical instruction.

A. Ensure that the congregation receives a basic level of discipleship (2012-15).

1. Aim for 100 percent of members and 75 percent of regular attenders to complete a Spiritual Assessment Test.
2. Foster an appreciation for—and exercising of—the various spiritual disciplines among the entire congregation (reading, memorizing and meditating upon Scripture, worship, prayer, giving, sacrifice and service, etc.). Each person needs to take responsibility for their own growth, to a certain extent.
3. Aim for 100 percent of members and 75 percent of regular attenders to create an intentional plan for working toward spiritual maturity.
4. Aim for 100 percent of members and 75 percent of regular attenders to have gone through at least once the VCB discipleship process or the equivalent.

B. Maximize the indoctrination and equipping aspects of the pulpit. The early church paid close attention to what the apostles taught: ‘*they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching*’ (Acts 2:42). Because the weekly sermon has the widest distribution of any teaching in our congregation, we need to make the most of it.

1. Protect the Senior Pastor’s schedule so that he can devote sufficient time to study and the preparation of sermons.
2. Preach verse-by-verse expositions of entire books, yet without neglecting practical application. Occasionally mix in some topical series on specific issues or practical themes related to Christian living.
3. Plan an entire year’s worth of preaching in advance (completed). Vary the genres and topics to ensure that, over time, we are preaching ‘*the whole counsel of God*’ (Acts 20:27).

4. The elders will encourage all home small groups to use the pulpit curriculum. Larry Osborne points out the significant educational benefits of using the lecture/lab paradigm:¹
 - a. Increased attentiveness during the sermon.
 - b. Increased note taking.
 - c. Spirited discussion.
 - d. Churchwide focus.
 - e. Reaching more people.
 - f. Moving beyond familiarity toward real knowledge.
 5. The Senior Pastor will commence a Doctor of Ministry degree to sharpen his pastoral leadership in general, and his preaching skills in particular.
- C. Develop a comprehensive curriculum for developing mature believers, from cradle to grave.
1. The Director of Children & Family Ministry will devise a curriculum for preschool to fifth grade. This will be a “grammar” of the Bible, theology and—to a lesser extent—church history.
 2. The Director of Youth Ministry will devise a seven-year curriculum for both junior high and senior high. This will include a healthy dose of apologetics, so youth will be prepared for college and adult life.
 3. The Pastor of Adult Ministries will provide a portrait of a mature disciple (In Place). He will also work together with the Equipping Center team to create a curriculum for adult education (see below).
 4. These three will work together with the Senior Pastor to ensure that there are seamless transitions from one level to the next.
 5. Determine how best to give remedial instruction to those who enter the curriculum somewhere in the middle.
- D. Continue to offer robust biblical and theological instruction in the Equipping Center, along with courses on practical Christian living and service (e.g. partnering with Heritage Stewardship Ministry to share biblical guidelines on the proper use of money).
1. The Equipping Center team will survey all the teaching ministries of VCB to develop a comprehensive equipping plan.
 2. Expand midweek course offerings.
 3. Provide more courses that are more experiential or practicum-based, that is, “learning by doing.” Partner with home small groups to do field trips and the like.
 4. Offer the spiritual gifts class on a periodic basis. Aim for 100 percent of members and 75 percent of regular attenders to complete the class and then find an area of service in line with their gifts.

5. Explore ways in which the Equipping Center can provide courses and other supporting materials in conjunction with the various sermon series.
- E. Develop leadership training for current and future leaders.
1. Provide a semiannual conference for all leaders, including pastors, elders, deacons, ministry team leaders, Sunday school teachers and small group leaders (2012-13). Plan this out well in advance to ensure maximum attendance.
 - a. Identify the training needs for the leadership of our church (2012-13).
 - b. Highlight the importance of the character qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.
 - c. Teach our philosophy of ministry.
 - d. Impart wisdom through case studies.
 - e. Identify those who have leadership gifts beyond their current area of service.
 2. Develop a curriculum for Trinity interns.
 3. Task the Children and Family Ministry Director with developing a program that effectively discipled children and trains them to be contributing members of the church body.
 4. Work in concert with the youth program to raise up junior leaders and get them serving in the congregation right away, particularly those who demonstrate maturity, giftedness and leadership potential (2012-13).
 5. Utilize “Rites of Passage” to foster intergenerational connections and fellowship, so that young people will make a successful transition to adulthood and continue to see church as relevant to their lives (2012).

IV. Empower Servants

Now that believers have been equipped, they are ready to *serve*. We will challenge the men, women and children of our church to think outside of themselves, empowering them to engage both believers and unbelievers in various types of service. This will take many forms: the evangelism of nonbelievers and the edification of believers, along with humanitarian work. It will also happen in a variety of contexts: the church, the community, and the world.

Thankfully, VCB throws the curve on the so-called “80-20 Rule,” where 20 percent of the people in an organization do 80 percent of the work. According to a recent survey of our members and regular attenders, 47 percent are shouldering one or more regular kingdom responsibilities. While this piece of data is relatively encouraging, it nevertheless reveals that we still have some work to do as a church. We need to encourage the other 53 percent to step up and serve as the Holy Spirit leads, using their God-given spiritual gifts for the good of others.

A. Serve the body of Christ at VCB.

1. Encourage believers to take the spiritual gifts course and then find a place where they can use their gifts. We want 100 percent of members and 75 percent of regular attenders to find a regular ministry in which to serve, whether *in* or *through* the church.
2. Foster a humble reliance upon God in prayer, both individually and corporately (James 5:16). Build into our DNA that prayer *is* the work of the church (Acts 6:4).
 - a. Continue receiving prayer requests in the weekend services and throughout the week.
 - b. Revitalize the Pastors' Prayer Team and the Intercessors as means for stimulating congregation-wide prayer.
 - c. Evaluate the degree to which prayer is a substantial aspect of home small group meetings. Strengthen this, if necessary.
 - d. Evaluate the monthly prayer meeting to gauge its effectiveness.
 - e. Plan three all-church prayer meetings per year around the same times as our evaluation and planning cycle. Make these high impact—something that people really want to attend.
3. Empower ministry teams to do the work of the church.
 - a. In a growing church, decision-making authority must be pushed down to the various ministry teams actually doing the work, under the supervision of the ministry staff person in that area.
 - b. The elders will approve policies written by the teams and ensure that the ministries are in line with the overall vision of the church.
 - c. The deacons will work with the ministry staff to establish realistic budgets, so that the vision of the elders is realized.
4. Improve communication between ministries, so as to reduce the number of redundancies and schedule conflicts.
5. Continue building biblical stewardship into the DNA of the church.
 - a. Preach at least one stewardship sermon per year. Mention stewardship in other sermons as it comes up naturally in the text. Give periodic financial updates from the pulpit.
 - b. Heritage Stewardship Ministry to continue teaching sound financial principles to all our people, not just those in financial difficulty.
 - c. Heritage Stewardship Ministry to work with Love INC and donors to establish a "Jubilee Fund" to help liberate members of our congregation who are in the bondage of debt.

B. Serve the community.

1. Local Impact will continue to provide home small groups with opportunities to serve the broader community (e.g. Love INC, Breakthrough Urban Ministries, Pacific Garden Mission, By the Hand, nursing homes, unplanned pregnancy counseling, etc.).
2. Local Impact will work with other ministries within VCB to foster a servant's attitude and to spur them toward community service (Children and Family Ministry, Youth, Young Adults, Men and Women).
3. The Equipping Center will continue to partner with Local Impact to offer courses for the community.

C. Serve the world (see section I.D, "Grow our global reach").

1. Global Impact will work with the various ministries of the church (Children, Youth, Young Adults, Men and Women) to teach the importance of global missions and to inspire future missionaries.
2. Global Impact will make the congregation aware of short-term missions opportunities for believers of all ages. They will also help sponsor these trips.
3. Establish ties with other like-minded churches in order to work together on global projects for both evangelism and humanitarian aid.
4. Continue to work the EFCA's *TouchGlobal* ministry to respond to crises around the world.

Conclusion

There is a self-sustaining aspect to this plan. As we share the Good News of Jesus Christ with unbelievers, and they are reconciled to God by the Holy Spirit's power, we will establish them in the body of Christ—the church. Here they will be matured and empowered to serve the church as well as the world. As they then share Christ in word and deed, they will bring new believers into the body and begin the process all over again. This is how we plan to use the resources God has entrusted to us.

Expectations for Members

What do the elders expect from the members of the church? What are the telltale marks of a person who is sufficiently invested in the ministry?

- *Extol God: Worship.* Faithful participation in the weekend worship services, including worship, prayer, feeding on Scripture, fellowship and service.
- *Evangelize Nonbelievers.* Making time to share the Gospel with nonbelievers in the four main spheres of life: family, friends, neighbors and co-workers.
- *Establish Community.* Faithful participation in a home small group twice per month.
- *Equip Believers.* Personal growth as a disciple, whether on your own, in a discipleship group or in a class in the Equipping Center, etc.
- *Empower Servants.* Regular kingdom service either *in* or *through* the ministry of the church.

So four of five relate quite nicely to the strategic plan. The fifth is overarching. If everyone is doing these things, then we should be able to accomplish our vision.

¹ Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008), 59-65.

