

“Refresh” - Updating How We Understand and Express Who We Are

A Gathering of for everyone who serves and supports the calling of the Westside Vineyard

NOTE: There was a lot shared at our “Re-Fresh” gathering on Saturday, November 12th which we believe will be helpful for everyone who is participating in the Westside Vineyard to hear and engage. The following is NOT a transcript of what was shared...but rather notes from which I drew upon. There are elements here that I did not read or even paraphrase (such as the explanatory paragraphs after each of the “Guiding Perspectives”.) There are elements of intent and heart that were likely clearer in what I actually said than are found in these notes. Therefore, I hope that you may find an opportunity to listen to the recording of the gathering, but I understand that some will more naturally desire to engage what they can view in writing which may offer its own advantages in time and clarity.

Introduction

We’re so glad that you’ve joined this time of engaging afresh who and how we live out our calling. It involves a sense of “update” ...or updating. There are **some practical positive updates that** we really value this opportunity to share with you personally.

But the more underlying desire is to engage the “updating” how we even think about being the church. I’ve not referring not any major outward changes – but significant ways we think about ourselves.

We are **not seeking to change who we are...but rather to “update” how we understand and express who we are... to best serve our calling in the years ahead.**

It is much the **same way that we develop our sense of personal identity and values in life over time.** At some level we are the same person throughout our lives. On another level we would likely describe ourselves differently when we were at different stages of life. The different ways we might identify ourselves...and the values we might express...would **change in part** because of the **deepening clarity within us** ... as well as the **common cultural reference points around us.**

As an example, like nearly all churches birthed in the 1970’s and 1980’s, we were commonly defined by having **“contemporary worship.”** That provided something meaningful to both church and unchurched culture who had at least a basic understanding that this was a significant new approach in contrast to a “traditional” forms and styles of worship. It is now a term that means less to church culture as the vast majority of churches have shifted to what is deemed “contemporary” in all or at least a majority of their worship...and the wider unchurched culture is less likely to find much meaning in such a term. So while our worship still shares the same general musical styles, the term “contemporary” is simply less meaningful today as it was in earlier years.

We want to begin...with a slight change to our formal communal name...

I. Our Communal Name – “The Westside Vineyard Church”

While a name is secondary to substance in terms of identity...we have practical reasons to make changes in a timely manner. We are looking at **two major projects** which will be major investments that involve the use of our church name: 1) a **new website** (already up in initial form), and 2) **new signs** on front and corner. This created a timely season to consider our church’s name and any possible change..

All Vineyard churches used “Vineyard Christian Fellowship” combined with their locality during the earlier years.

Over time the majority of Vineyard churches have changed from that extended name. [1]

The change is likely due to

1) Length – Using “Vineyard Christian Fellowship” combined with one’s locality at the beginning or end...becomes longer than anyone will naturally use or make reference to.

2) Cultural Relatability – The word “Fellowship” is commonly correlated with past religious life more than a quality of meaningful connection and community which it is intended to represent.

And in a post-Christian culture, even the term “Christian” no longer reflects simply a positive correlation with Christ...but rather the “religion” that has developed in his name. “Christian” represents many correlations that are distinct from “Christ.”

So we have considered various options, including “Westside Vineyard”, “Westside Vineyard Church”, “Westside Vineyard Community Church”...and possibly a new primary name, noting the popular use of names such as The River, Crossroads, etc) .

It was recognized that “Vineyard” 1) is the name the Lord impressed upon those who founded what God began here... and thus bears uniquely significant spiritual roots for us, 2) is a name that now sounds familiar yet not laden with the sense of “old religious” or denominational language, and therefore 3) is a good symbol to balance trust (vs. trendy) yet free from overly traditional religious language.

In April 2015, our Council of Elders were united in transitioning to the simpler “Westside Vineyard Church.” We assume that more commonly people will simply say “the Westside Vineyard”... but we include “Church” as part of our public signage and use as a clearer marker to clarify what would otherwise be confusing in terms of what type of entity we are.

II. Our Calling to Embrace the Unchanging Gospel Amidst a Post-Christian Culture

My central desire is to invite you into the underlying call I believe we must respond to as we embrace our time and place.

In many regards I am simply drawn back to how I met Jesus and the significance of the church.

When I first heard the Gospel...of how “God so loved the world that he had sent His only Son to be a sacrifice so that I could have my nature of sin forgiven...and live forever with God”... it held the power to change everything. As I’ve said on other occasions...it spoke truth to my soul...truth that transcended mere understanding...but spoke of something true and right at a deeper level. And it also led to an experience of God...of manifest presence that I wasn’t “trying” to have nor was it manipulated by anyone. And then as time went on and I had to reconcile this new sense of reality with reason...it involved that which I could engage intellectually...and find reasonable. This new reality made the best sense of the world I experienced. And it only naturally became that which was worth giving my whole life for.

But all of this found life in a church that allowed me to hear the Gospel in a way that I could understand. It involved a church that was **reaching people like me**. That meant a kid living in the current culture – it wasn’t entirely foreign to my way of living – long hair... causal clothes... music... way of talking... and just general issues. That was a big deal, because it was in the midst of a huge cultural change...and I represented that emerging change.

Looking back,

“We are here because of those who saw change and were able to see God at work in it.”

What many refer to as the “Jesus movement” that emerged in the late 1960’s and 1970’s... amidst the counter-cultural movement... confronted a country of church leaders saw what caused very significant fears... saw **dangers**...it was marked by the dangers of “sex, drugs, and rock n’ roll.” But there were a few among the thousands of leaders of churches...that saw Jesus was at work amidst their discomfort. I am sure they had to go through a bit of processing... but ultimately they realized that there must also be a **corrective within church culture**... that **Jesus was not bound in the ‘conventional’** but rather actually bore some of the ‘radical’ revolutionary nature that was a part of the counter-cultural movement.

The counter-cultural had corrective element for the church. That is what these leaders were able to grasp...and what allowed their way of being the church to change which allowed countless lives to be drawn into new movements of churches.

This included Chuck Smith who led Calvary Chapels... and Kenn Gulliksen...who initially planted this church from Calvary Chapel...and John Wimber whom he would join in forming the Vineyard churches.

It certainly **involved issues like the style** of dress and music...but beneath those obvious issues of style... it was about what those and many other changes represented. It represented this truth which we face as well:

“When there is an inability for the current common culture to relate to the current church culture, we must engage the posture and presumptions of each, while embracing the power of the unchanging Gospel to transform lives.”

That is what those leaders and so many like them did.

Now 40 to 45 years later our culture has shifted far less dramatically...but far more deeply.

The changes have emerged into what is often summed up and referred to as “Post-Christian” culture. For the past 10 to 20 years, the emerging culture... those younger...have become less rooted or identified with Christian beliefs, values, worldview, or participation in church.

So the emerging culture is not thinking about whether Jesus can be engaged by those who bear their “contemporary style” or “social revolutionary” values...they are turned away from what they deem the religion that bears Christ’s name altogether.

Our current predominantly Post-Christian culture is turned away from the church...with thoughts such as....

- Christians seem to presume a level of separation and superiority...that doesn’t seem fitting or fair.
- Christians seem focused on fighting for political power that appears to be a self-serving and wants to control others...defending their right to be a “Christian nation” that can’t respect a pluralistic reality.
- Christians seem to have a foolish desire to hold onto irrational beliefs. (This is reflected in a new declaration of atheism that was never desired or sensible to earlier decades.)

This change in culture can seem very different than that of the 60’s countercultural revolution. It’s not brightened with “flower power” happy hippies. But I believe that at the core, God would speak to us the same core truth he spoke to those in the past:

“Don’t be afraid...the Gospel remains the same...it is the power of God to save ...and the God who has done such a work is still at work...and is not ultimately bound by the current culture at large or that of the church. Engage the posture and presumptions of both the current common culture and the current church culture... while embracing the power of the unchanging Gospel to transform lives.”

My desire is to **help us Embrace the Unchanging Gospel Amidst a Post-Christian Culture**

With this in mind, we have been developing a fresh and more refined statement of our purposes... and vision and values. Most has been a process of just trying to simplify a lot of overlapping material...and we are still in the process. Below you will see an emerging way of declaring how we understand our purpose...or mission. I encourage you to take time to read that. What may be most helpful is what I have included at the start, which explains:

“More than believing that the church has a mission; we believe that God’s mission has a church. We have a mission, and what we know as “church” is meant to organize us to do that mission.”

That can put a lot of church into perspective.

III. Our Central Purpose [Note: This section was not engaged in our meeting, but the written statements were included in handout.]

More than believing that the church has a mission; we believe that God’s mission has a church. We have a mission, and what we know as “church” is meant to organize us to do that mission.

As such, we recognize that we are to shape our church life in fulfillment of God’s purposes, rather than simply personal preferences or the preservation of an institution.

Jesus came into the world with a clear purpose and was calling us into that purpose. It was centered in declaring and demonstrating that, in him, God’s good reign was invading our world ruled by spiritual oppression. (Jesus’s central declaration was that the “Kingdom of God has come.”) We believe this can be reflected in a three-fold calling:

Personal Transformation: Restoring Identity in God (the Goodness of God within us)

Jesus is calling us to be “united with him” in a life of submission and satisfaction in God. Therefore, as disciples (students) of the life of Jesus, we desire to become increasingly centered and satisfied in God’s love; liberating us from the false pursuit of what possessions or even people can provide. This profound process of transformation of our identity and inner life involves the heart (will), mind (thought), body and soul.

Jesus said in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” We are called from merely striving in our own self-nature to that of abiding in God working in us through the indwelling of His Spirit.

Community: Restoring Community in God (the Goodness of God among us)

Jesus confronts the divided reality of our world. Apart from God, human nature has been given to contempt and competition. We see division all around us: hatreds rooted in ethnic and national identity; hostility between genders; separation between rich and poor. And in more sobering moments we see division within ourselves... pride and prejudice... hurt and hostility.

Christ is establishing a new community to show the world His reconciling power. It is way of relating in which by embracing our common ground in God our differences no longer define and divide us. The church is to be a “preview” community of the Kingdom of heaven... a foretaste of all things united through God and unto God. This is why Jesus said our unity was essential...and prayed for it (see John 17:23).

Therefore, we are called into a life in which we develop genuine supportive relationships and serve one another as with the unique gifts God has given us. (Eph. 2:19; 4:15-16, 25-29; Heb. 10:25).

Mission: Restoring the World in God (the Goodness of God around us)

Jesus called his followers to go do what he was doing...declaring the kingdom... healing... and leading others into the new life he leads...and to do so to “the ends of the earth.” He said. “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.” (John 14:12)

What I want to focus on at this juncture are some “Guiding Perspectives.”

IV. Some Guiding Perspectives

The following perspectives guide our approach to how we understand and approach “being the church.” We believe they can help both those in common culture and those from traditional “church culture” better understand and approach the life of the church. Each is simply a statement that is then explained more clearly in the paragraph that follows.

1. Our calling is more centered than bound; for being centered in Jesus, rather than merely bound in a form of “religious identity” is what keeps us called every day into an active and ongoing relational response.

We recognize that the traditional way of we speak of one “becoming a Christian” can focus on a single and settled choice. While this may refer to a very significant initial choice, Jesus’s call was to “follow” him, which captures the truth that we are always living in response to his calling.

2. What we share in common is as important as our differences.

We want to confront our common tendency to find our identity through the differences that divide us...and divide our world into “us” and “them.” We hear the challenge of Jesus to confront our false notions of separation and superiority (Luke 10:25-37.) Without diminishing

our differences, we recognize the common ground of our basic human nature and needs...and that fundamentally “everyone is us.” Therefore we find value in recognizing the common ground and common good we can share with others. This brings freedom to enjoy diversity in our communal life – across ethnicity and culture, age and stage, and even political perspectives. (Romans 12:18; Matthew 7:3-5; Colossians 1:19-20; Galatians 3:28) Similarly, we want to follow Christ’s lead as he shared meals with many with whom he did not share the same religious, moral, or political positions... sharing common space without compromising differences. We recognize that Christ bears both exclusive truth claims and inclusive love aims.

This speaks to at least two major aspects of our lives...

- **Our relationship to one another. (Consider the challenges of the election...and of the power to be defined and divided by our differences.)**
- **Our relationship to those who don’t yet believe.**
 - **The problem I see is not that there isn’t a calling to be “separated from the world”...but how we separate ourselves from the world. There are genuine differences from the “ways” of the world from the ways of Jesus ...but often we have become separated in our basic relational connection...denying the common ground we share.**
 - **This can define our relationship to the wider community for which we must maintain distinction, while also “seeking the peace and prosperity of the land God has carried us to.” (Jeremiah 29:7)**

Tim Keller who pastor;’s in New York City captures this really well when asked what is the essence of being a missional church. [Played video clip - Tim Keller – Tim Keller's Characteristics of a Missional Church. Stopped at 2:18] Can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFFISb-Zsc8> or <https://vimeo.com/11998601>

Keller elsewhere explains that in the past evangelism was naturally focused on the “what” of the Gospel...and people’s questions were often a dodge because culture “Christianized” people. But today...the “why” (Should I believe?)...is not a dodge. It may be more a legitimate part of a sincere process. Which leads to the next “Perspective.”

3. Engaging the relevant questions and ideas of our current culture is essential...for it is part of engaging God.

Culture is neither “good” or “bad” ...it is just the collective mindset shaped by current ideas and trends. While the most core nature of human life and ultimate truth may not change, we understand that culture does change. Styles change. Values change. Questions change. The way we think changes. We value engaging the culture as it is. Therefore we want to openly and honestly engage the current ideas of our day, including science, sexuality and every other sphere of common thought.

We've chosen to address some tough topics over the years... including the current series which considers how we must learn how to unite in God when we have difference in politics, race, economics.

I think it's essential for two reasons –

Our Connection to culture – people want to know what God is like...how the God we claim as God speaks to such issues.

Our Conversion – We all have aspects of identity and trust that are going to be called to change. If we can't talk about money...or sex...or how we relate to human governing...we won't face much of what Jesus was calling out...and was meant to be “converted.”

4. God is involved in every sphere of life.

There has been a longstanding tendency to divide life into what we consider “spiritual” and “secular”... and reduce our sense of what parts of life God is involved in. What if we began to consider God's involvement in every sphere of life? What if we understood that God is always at work... in our workplaces and living spaces? It is from such an awareness that we seek to overcome the separation between Sunday and Monday, worship and work, and seek an integrated life by allowing God to speak into every aspect of life.

We have created a religious life that is generally very separated from our actual lives...from how we live...which is really who we are.

If we are honest, we may sense this divide all the time...sense that there's a duplicity that becomes normal.

If we shift our focus to include how we are being in our wider lives...we will create a more genuine spiritual formation.

5. Real faith grows through real experience.

Faith begins with something new breaking into our lives... and exploring it. While it begins with something we may hear, it is never something that grows merely from accumulating more knowledge. As Dave Schmelzter articulates, “Instead, we're each invited into the kind of adventure that Abraham—“the father of faithful people”—was invited into. Abraham left his comfortable world to take a trip to someplace he couldn't exactly place on the maps he had, a trip that would require close attention to a supernatural guide. [It involves} feeling vulnerable and taking new risks and wondering if we're on the right track and suspecting we're misunderstood and needing to pray at a gut level.” As such, we approach faith as involving personal and practical steps that are always before us.

6. There is freedom to be “naturally supernatural” as we engage the intersection of heaven and earth.

Jesus explained that he had come to reveal that the Kingdom of God was now at hand breaking into this world... and that God's reign and rule would be reflected in signs and wonders of such justice and restoration. (Luke 4:18-19) From this he began to pray for those who were sick... and oppressed. He sent out his followers to do the same – to share and show how God's working was at hand. (Matthew 10:7-8) After Jesus crossed paths with a man in need, and healed him, Jesus explained to those who were surprised, "My Father is always working, and so am I. (John 5:17)

We join the call to pray for those in need. We want to remain increasingly aware that we live in the intersection of heaven and earth...and serve what God is doing wherever we are. We understand that Jesus was inaugurating that which would not be fully realized until God brought the full judgment and restoration of creation. Until then, we embrace that the Kingdom of God is both "now and not yet." As such, we are able to embrace that suffering is real...and God is there with us...and that signs and wonders that point to God's ultimate reign are real. We find freedom to be "naturally supernatural" without presuming we always understand what only God can sovereignly understand about His working...and knowing that we ultimately need connection more than answers.

7. Locality matters because loving our neighbors includes our actual neighbors and communities.

We recognize that we have become an increasingly "event" oriented culture. This has led to approaching "church" as an event with little relationship to location. We value restoring the relationship to where we actually live. The paradox of modern urban culture is that we have more means to connect yet often feel more estranged from those who are actually the closest in proximity to us. As our world becomes more globally connected, we must also become even more locally connected. We believe we will generally serve the calling of God best when our connection to Jesus relates more naturally to where we live...and we consider what it means to love our actual neighbors. (Romans 12:13; Luke 5:27-29; Acts 17:262-27)

8. The healthiest community is that which creates connections that value each age and stage of life...and the relationship between them.

We recognize the tendency to become increasingly identified with our own particular generation...and neglect the value and connection with other stages in life. As a result, some church communities become those of adults reaching later years disheartened that the next generation is missing...and churches of young adults eventually wonder how to navigate a future when the reality of life stages continues. We hear the beauty of God's call to bless the children (Mark 10:13-16) and the eldest (Leviticus 19:32; 1 Peter 5:5)...seeing what each offers to life... and we believe this is true for every stage in between. We believe that we are the healthiest as a community when we cultivate connections for each age and stage of life...as well as the relationships between them. We believe that there is something vital in having groups in which

we can share with those of the same “generational world” and stage in life, while also being able to have connections that continue through and across life stages.

V. Our Transition Towards a More Integrated Future

Here is what is amazing...we have a breadth of six generations significantly coming together in response to God.

What is really amazing is how that has developed from our beginnings. I first came to this church when I was 25 years old...and most people were just like me. The majority were in their 20s and early thirties... nearly all unmarried. As the years continued... the community became more a combined with individuals and married and eventually families. Then, back in 2000 I sensed we needed to look behind us. And we began the year with a central prayer for the gathering of a new generation of lives and leaders...which God profoundly answered that very year. This began with Home Churches and emerged into a larger gathering that became known as Altaer. Soon after...we also grew in families whose children were reaching the full breadth of stages which expanded our ministry to youth. God’s equally significant provision of a facility also created a more natural connection for those who were older in years. So what was a more predominantly and narrowly defined community of young adults during the 1980s and 1990s...has grown to be a community of every generation.

Being multi-generational is who we are.

More recently, we have come to realize that we are being called from BEING multi-generational to BUILDING a multi-generational life.

From merely reacting to circumstances ...to proactively building what God desires in a multi-generational life.

Many years ago we began to gather many young adults... began a Sunday evening service... Altaer... from which many lives have met...married...had children...made lifelong friendships...and most of all have grown as lives and leaders.

A few months ago we began to see that value in transitioning to a more integrated future...in which those lives... became not only participants...but leaders of the wider community.

We made plans to continue to have Home Churches that allow younger adults to develop meaningful relationships... while also connecting in the multi-generational gatherings on Sunday mornings.

We believe that this transition will...

1. Provide the best opportunity to maintain relationships through the changing stages of life.

We have realized that it is difficult to develop relationships that are then limited by the changing of stages in life. By integrating into multi-generational larger communal gatherings, relationships can still share connection even when aging, marriage, or parenting would otherwise bring a change to the connections due to changing gatherings. There will also be the opportunity for young adults to connect in the larger context even when they may choose differently between age-based or multi-generational based Home Churches. (Young adults won't have to choose so definitively between multi-generational connection and stage of life connection. They would still be able to have some connection with other young adults regardless of what type of Home Church connection they choose.)

2. Provide the more complete perspective and voice of younger lives and leaders into the gatherings which are our primary engagement and expression of Christ to the wider culture which is younger.

While younger adults have had the opportunity to most fully express their gifts in the young adult led gathering, we need their unique gifts and leadership at the forefront of our wider adult gatherings. Those younger are generally able to engage the wider community most naturally. In addition, there is an opportunity to mutually gain from one another at this juncture.

3. Provide the most synergy of gifts and resources; uniting more time, treasure, and talent together.

We have had an underlying desire to be less 'weekend gathering centered' in the use of our resources...a challenge which has been particularly felt due to holding four gatherings with three unique preparations and provisions. By uniting our time, treasure, and talents...we will be better stewards of the resources which are involved in large gatherings... and create more freedom for investing into more personal and missional facets.

So beginning next week (November 21st)...we will merge the gatherings. The Sunday evening Altaer gathering, led by younger adults...will be integrated into the Sunday morning times. We will be joined together...and beginning at the start of the year...we will more fully integrate their leadership in various areas of ministry.

If you could see what I see... it's really exciting. These younger adults are among the finest lives...and healthiest leaders.

And we **will begin** a process towards **integrating High School students** into the larger gatherings on Sunday mornings...while **maintaining their mid-week community**. This is a process we will begin engaging with High School students and their parents.

We're excited about this process... but we also know it comes with a challenge... a very healthy challenge. So let me conclude this element with a challenge...

Building a multi-generational life involves expanding that nature of our...

Comfort (style)

The first thing we have to expand is our narrow range of comfort in terms of style – including format, music, cultural perspectives, and more. [2]

Control (influence)

Perhaps the hardest thing to expand and extend is control. We tend not to like change...but might be okay as long as we get to choose the nature of the change. We need to expand control.

Leadership implies influence. I believe that such influence needs to be earned...but as it is earned... it needs to be extended.

Not easy for me. But as my good friend reminds, when I had to take over the leadership of this church...I was only 30 years old. And there was nothing exceptional about my maturity. With the support of those older... we found our way by God's leading.

Connection (relationships)

Ultimately...we are called to expand our relationship. It's not just a matter of sitting next to those of different ages and stages in life...but of sharing with them. I want to encourage us to expand our conversations...to get past the awkward and get to know one another.

- **To those 50 and older – we are one's for whom the future will be most determined... it will be determined by what we choose regarding our heart to expand comfort, control, and connection for the sake of Jesus.**
- **To those in their 40's – you are the “hinge” of lives... who are vital to integrating the span of ages...because you bear some understanding across the broader span of stages in life.**
- **To those under 40 – You are the one's for whom we look...to rise up...and to lead.**

VI. The Transition of Jimmy Reyes to Serve on the Pastoral Staff of the Valley Vineyard in Reseda where he and his family live.

Jimmy Reyes shared (the following are notes that reflect what was shared)

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you about a transition my family and I are going through. We are taking steps of faith as I've have been called to serve as an associate pastor at the Valley Vineyard. This news is bittersweet for us, on one hand, we are sad about having to leave our Westside family. We have been part of this church for

13 ½ years and have only but love and appreciation for this family. Through this ministry I had the space to heal after being part of churches that were full of legalism. I am also eternally thankful for the trust deposited in me that allowed me to serve God and others in this fellowship.

We are also excited because we feel this opportunity is a door that God has opened even when we were not looking for one. There are so many amazing things about this transition. For example: We will be part of our sister church which was planted at similar times as the Westside Vineyard. I am joining a staff, which is looking to bring change and try to embrace younger lives, which I feel I have a heart for. Also, over the years I've been getting a heart to be more intentional in embracing locality, the fact that the church is in our neighborhood is an amazing joining of spheres of relationships in our lives.

This process took about 6 months and through this time I processed individually and collectively with our pastoral staff. Even though the Valley Vineyard is within walking distance from our house, we were waiting for a sense of calling instead of transitioning because of comfort. God spoke through different prophecies and different words of knowledge. In this time, I also feel God orchestrated a “divine appointment” in how I met the president of the neighborhood council in our area. I have since met with him and continue to process how best to be a light in my neighborhood. I also learned that the senior pastor was praying for someone who was bilingual, had a young family and was close to the Vineyard in locality and in knowledge of the DNA (I fit all the criteria he felt God impressed on him). Finally when I shared with our church council and our Spanish pastoral core team, people responses were so encouraging. There was sadness because of the loss of relationship, but everyone had a sense of this transition being good and being from God.

I am also confident in the decisions made for the future of the worship team and know that we have a very competent and talented group of lives that will continue to lead this significant ministry. This factor was also a big part of my own sense of being released to be able to make the decision to take on this new opportunity.

I am so thankful for all of your lives and hearts. My own life is richer because of our interactions. I pray that you will continue to be committed to the cause of the Kingdom and look forward to hearing about all the great stories of all that God will continue to do on the Westside.

This has been one of the most unusual transitions I have experienced. Jimmy has been one of special hearts that has made up this team. He brings a servant's warmth and heart to our weekly

process as a team. He and I speak personally nearly every week. Yet... I feel so good about this transition...because it is so right.

The Valley Vineyard is like a sister from the same mother...we were birthed from the same founding pastor and group of lives. Jimmy is ideal for what they need for their future, This transition to serve them reflects everything we are embracing in values... that it's good to skew young...that locality matters... and so much more.

We also believe that the challenge this brings to the Comunidad Vina community may be hard but healthy... changes that will call out new things.

We fully support Comunidad Vina's core team...and recognize with Jimmy that **Kevin Rivas** has best been prepared to serve as the pastor in this coming season. We join in support of Kevin and his wife Esther.

Jimmy has of course also served as our Pastor of Worship...and brought so much of what serves our times of honoring God in worship. But we feel very good about how God has prepared us for this season.

We have been blessed by two worship leaders who are bring both remarkable gifts and hearts – **Dean Guevara and Jonathan Solowy.**

Joel will serve the coming year in terms of working with Dean and Jonathan in macro worship dynamics. He will be able to help shape a new season of worship as the young adult worship team members join into the mornings.

Joel has also already transitioned into a role that we refer to as Pastor of Operations...for lack of a better term. As he is now overseeing the many who serve all the operating and administrative aspects of our communal life.

All of this has been an opportunity to coalesce into a great fit of role and strengths.

Some additional reference notes:

1. There are relatively few Vineyards that still use “Christian Fellowship.” The majority (appears about 65-75%)... are now “Vineyard Community Church” or “Vineyard Church” or “(Location) Vineyard” (such as “Coast Vineyard” or “Columbus Vineyard”) Another 10-15% are using more

unique names (i.e. The River, The Well, The King's Vineyard, New Wine Vineyard Church, The Journey – A Vineyard Church, Connections – A Vineyard Community Church, Vineyard City Church, Dwell, Church at the Well, etc).

While there are certainly many Vineyards which carry some use the VCF wording...many who previously had...have changed.

- In 2003 the San Louis Obispo VCF (founded in 1978) changed it's name to Mountainbrook Community Church.
- In 2006, Vineyard Christian Fellowship of North Phoenix changed it's name to Vineyard Church North Phoenix.
- Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Columbus changed it's name to Vineyard Columbus

8. Regarding "comfort" in style and format, I find the following very insightful. (From John Ortberg's article "The fractured world of multi-generational church leadership.")

"Those of us who are older tend to under-estimate the difference between generations. We think that what feels comfortable to us will not—or should not—be a barrier to those who are younger. Those of us who are younger tend to over-estimate the difference between generations. We feel as if those who are older are a different species and could never understand our experience. One of the most important concepts along these lines has to do with the notion of connection. Who feels "connected" at our church?

It has to do with whether or not, when I enter a church, it feels like a place for "people like me." How people dress, how they talk, what the music is like—many details create a sense of connection or disconnection.

If I feel connected, I am likely to overlook how disconnected people of another generation may feel. So we have to have constant conversations about the experience of people in our generation at our church. We will never be able to make all people feel totally connected at all services. But at least we have to be aware of the dynamics."