

Vision Casting

What's Next

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

January 21, 2024

Every year around this time, we take a service on a Sunday morning, which gives me an opportunity to share the vision for the future of the church that God has put on the hearts, not just of me, but the staff and the leadership team. And for the last 19 years, that direction, that goal, hasn't changed. Our foundational goal as a church is helping people take their next step toward Jesus.

Last year, I used the analogy of building a house, and I said, "This would be the foundation of our house as a church." This is our number one goal. Everything we do is leading toward this, helping people take their next step toward Jesus. Now, the ways that we accomplish this goal are fluid. They stay mostly the same, but there's some flexibility in the midst of that. As I took time to look at my own life and my own spiritual faith journey, I wanted to look back at the points in my life when God drew me close to him, when he pulled me closer in my relationship.

And I began talking with other individuals. And I asked them the same question. As you look back in your spiritual journey, do you see times where God drew you close? What did He use to draw you closer to Him? And I began to see themes. And so as we were praying about the future of the church and what we wanted God to do in us and through us, we decided to make these kind of the walls of our house.

We believe these are the things that God often uses, not only uses, there's other things as well, to draw us close to Him when it comes to our corporate faith and worship and time we spend together. And so we said that number one on that list was attending a worship service like you are today, this morning. Being a part of a worship service where somebody gets up and preaches the Word of God, where there's opportunity for corporate worship, for us to thank God for who He is and what He has done, and then secondly, to join a life group.

So not just a large setting like this, but then also to join a smaller group of other people where you can offer prayer requests and you can get more intimate in your Bible study and ask questions where it would be more interactive. God often has used those small group settings to draw me closer to Him and then finally is serving. There's something that happens when we serve other people. God often uses those opportunities to actually bring us closer to Him.

And so we've said as a church, "If you have three hours to give to your faith on a corporate kind of community level, this is what we think you should be doing." But I need to take a moment to clarify because people will often ask me the question and say, "So the best thing I can do for my faith is attend a worship service." Well, I'm not going to argue that that's right or wrong, but you will notice on every slide that we have up here, somewhere in the slide is this wording, the word of God.

Because we believe this also is foundational to your faith, that not only should you be getting the Word of God in a corporate setting like this, but you also should be doing it yourself in your personal study. We encourage you to do that. And there are many that I've talked with over the last year that have said, "You

know what, Pastor, I took your challenge, and we're going to read through the Bible in an entire year." And so they've read through the entire Bible and they have questions. They bring it to their small group time. We think that that's important.

We think that personal prayer life is important. Worshiping is important. Giving is important. All of these things that God uses. And so this is the model that we have come up with, but it's not the only model. There are other models that other churches have landed on, and that's fine. But one of the struggles with there being more than one model for a church to help people take their next step toward Jesus is that the enemy often tries to cause division, tries to cause division in the church because we all naturally have preferences when it comes to the model.

God may speak to you differently than He speaks to me or somebody else. For instance, I may feel closest to God in nature. And so I want to plan events where we're doing things outside and at parks and things like that where you say, "You know what? I feel closest to God when I am alone doing a Bible study in my room." That's when I feel closest. Someone else may say, "I feel closer to God while we're singing a loud worship song." And someone else would say, "You know what?"

What works for me to grow in my faith is an intimate Bible study with just a few other believers. And so it's easy for us because of our preferences which are not wrong in and of themselves to believe that our way is the only way or the best way. And so because of that as a church, and you're probably sick of hearing me say this, but we have this phrase that we call unity over preference. We say that this is like the roof of our house.

It protects us from the attacks that the enemy is going to try to bring upon us. We believe that it is very, very important for us to stay united because our unity and our love for each other is our witness to the world. Imagine being outside of the church and you come to church and everybody inside the church is just fighting with each other over preferences, why would you want to join a community like that? And yet that's what the enemy often tries to do.

You see, we have differences. It's okay. We're not going to agree on what the best worship song is. We're not going to agree on what the color of the carpet should be in the sanctuary, who the best preacher is, or even which college football team to root for. So as a church, you need to know we make a conscious effort and decision to see the beauty in our differences instead of the frustration.

Because it's easy to get frustrated when other people have different preferences than you and you just want it to be your way. We choose to see the beauty in those differences instead of the frustration. We try to find a balance in all of our preferences so that everybody feels welcomed and nobody is excluded.

Now, every year when I make a statement like that, unity over preference and we want everybody to feel welcomed, people will come to me and say, "Well, does that mean that you're just okay with everything and everybody, and there's no absolute truth?" And so I want to take a moment to clarify there are certain non-negotiables, foundational truths of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ that are not preferences. They're not preferential. They have to be true. It's what it means to be a Christ follower.

One of those things is prayer. We think that prayer is important, and we're going to stress it, and we're going to talk about it, and we're going to do it. We believe in the authority of Scripture. What does that mean? That means that as a church, we believe that the Bible that we have is the Word of God. We believe it is given to us from Him to teach us, to correct us, to draw us closer to Him. It means that we believe the whole Bible is true.

We don't have statements like most of it's true, or it's just a book of good stories, and a lot of it you know can be taken okay, but some of it is not. No. We believe 100% in the foundational truth of the Word of God. We believe in the importance of sharing the good news, the importance of fellowshiping with other

believers, serving others. We think it's important for discipleship to take place where each believer is also helping somebody else grow in their walk with Jesus.

These are some of our foundational truths as a church. And this is the model that we use to try to help people to take their next step toward Jesus. Again, it's not the only one. It's the one that we have landed on, and it's the one that as we look back on our own lives, seemed to be the ways that God drew us closer to Him. Now I want to shift gears a little bit and talk more practical to you. For the next little bit, I want to share with you the blessings of 2023 as a church.

For some of you that are new, this will just be a good recap of what the last year has brought us. And then I want to share what the prayerful future is in 2024 for us as a church. I want to share some of our goals, some of our dreams. And I want to hear from you as well. So there's going to be an opportunity. I'm intentionally going fast, but also have my message a little shorter than normal so that we can have a question-and-answer time. It's an opportunity for you to ask questions. Pastor Sam's going to walk around with a microphone.

Again, you may think you're loud enough in here for people to hear you and you might be, but we have a live feed that's going on. And so that they can hear your question. We'll ask that you wait until you have the microphone. You can ask your question. I'll do my best to answer. And if not, I will send you to somewhere else, all right, to get the answer to your question. Then we're going to ratify the new elders. There's three new elders and trustees. I'll talk to you about that.

And then we are going to fittingly close our service with a baptism as two young ladies make their public proclamation of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. So let's pray and then we'll jump in. Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us. We pray of it as a church that we would bring glory and honor to your name, that it wouldn't be about us, but that it would be about you. And as we look back on our blessings from the previous year and we look forward to our prayerful future, may you guide us and direct us and lead us.

We ask us in Jesus' name, amen. As I look back on 2023, we were extremely blessed as a church, many baptisms throughout the year, many first-time confessions of faith amongst the children and teenagers and some adults. In 2023, I had the privilege of hiring two more amazing staff to help us as a church, Levi Sifal, who's helping with the junior high and Brenda Sturry, who helps out with volunteers and all of the events we do and many other things.

They have been a huge blessing to our church this year. Over the last six to eight months, it has been awesome having them. They have fit in very well with the staff. One of the things that we always do every year is called our give it all away Sunday. If you're new to the church, we intentionally don't let this get outside of the walls or try not to. We have one service, usually early June, where we collect an offering, and 100% of it, we give it away. That's why it's called the Give It All Away Offering.

And this last year, that is the largest offering we've ever collected, and we gave it all away to ministries and organizations. And it truly is a blessing to be a part of a congregation that is so giving and loving. As I look back on the calendar, it was wonderful to do Bethlehem Marketplace again for the second time after COVID. Amazing men's and women's events throughout the year where people took their next step toward Jesus, Fairview students and Fairview kids as they had various events and meetings and watching children and teens grow in their faith.

If you look at our weekly calendar, which not everybody gets to see, my heart is always warmed as I look at all of the activities that are going on around the church. You'll see BSF, which is short for Bible Study Fellowship for Men and Women that takes place every week. You'll see various Bible studies that people in the church just lead throughout the week. Every week, they meet on Tuesday afternoons or Thursday

mornings, and they're with their small group doing Bible studies. We have life groups that are meeting at the church and outside the church.

We have accountability groups called A-Teams that some men have been a part of for 20, 30, 40 years that meet. We have a homeschool co-op group that meets certain parts during the year where we have over 100 students and parents that meet on Tuesdays in our building to do their homeschool co-op. We have trail life. We have grief share. The list goes on and on, but it is a blessing to be a part of a church where ministry is happening. We've had quite a few new people become members of Fairview over the last two years.

Just in the last year, in 2023, we had 41 people become members of Fairview Missionary Church and even more over the last couple. So what I want to do here, if you have become a member of Fairview Missionary Church in the last two years, would you stand up? Is there anybody here that has become a member of Fairview in the last two years? Yeah, let's applaud. Become a member. We've had a lot of people that are joining.

And again, we can talk about membership at another time. To become a member, you just meet with me. You have to put up with me for 45 minutes, and you can become a member if you can last, all right? No. I just like to hear your story. I just set up a meeting with me. I hear your faith journey. I hear a story about your family. And when you become a member, it just means you can vote on selling of property, buying property, voting on elders, and be on the elder leadership team. But you obviously don't need to be a member to attend services, lead a Sunday school class, anything like that.

But we've had a lot of new members. Now let's look forward. Let's shift gears again and think about 2024 and what we prayerfully are looking forward to in the coming years. The first one that I've been mentioning for the last 10 years that is actually going to happen is a foyer and sanctuary remodel. All right? I've been talking about it for a long time. We've been saving so that we can make this happen. And I know it doesn't look like a lot has happened in the last year, but a lot has happened. We've chosen our construction company that's going to help us manage the project. We've signed a contract with them.

We've also signed a contract with the audio, visual, and light company that's going to help us here in the sanctuary. We've put together various committees that are making these decisions and working on this process as well as the design. This is scheduled to actually begin this year in 2024 right after Easter, and the goal is to be done before BMP of this year, all right? So we've got a few months to try to make this happen. The organizations that we are working with, the companies work with churches.

And so the goal is that every Sunday, we'll still be able to have service. But I will warn you, there may be Sundays where it's a little more messy in here or in the foyer. And so we're just going to have to kind of put up with that, but we will always be able to have services. And so we look forward to that and to the process that's going to make. We are going to have some Sundays where it is a little messy. I have some pictures that I'll share with you as I get those. The design team is working on those and those that are with the design team with our company so I can share that.

Again, there are multiple teams that are making this decision. So if you don't like it when we are done, I will connect you with them. All right? I have intentionally stayed off of the design team. They're going to work through all of that. And if you do like it, I will also share their names with you so that you can thank them for all of their hard work. I want to share with you that this remodel, our goal, our desire, and our promise, really, to you, is that we are going to do this only with money that has been saved.

It is our desire and goal not to take out debt. I really think that is a promise. I don't want to just say it's a goal. We are not going to take out debt for this. Just so you know, me personally and many people, if not all the people on the leadership team and elders do not like debt. We are opposed to it. I believe that debt only

hinders ministry in the church as you have to worry about paying off that debt. So as a church for the last few years, we have been saving for this remodel project.

But as many of you know, with the economy and inflation and everything else, it seemed like as much as we were saving, cost was going up. And so we have done our best to save in the midst of our normal budget so that we don't have to raise any extra money. Try not to in order to make this process happen. Now, let me share one more thing. Just to let you know the hearts of the leaders and elders that we have on our team and how giving you all are as a church. Many of you know, we sold two properties that we had here south of the church.

We owned two homes south of the church, and we sold those. Of course, we bought those with money that had been given to the church. And the leaders and elders said, "Listen, I know we're saving for a remodel. And in the midst of saving for that remodel, we've continued to give away a lot of money to ministries and missionaries. That's always our goal. But even on top of that, our elders and leaders wanted to tithe on the money that came in from those two properties. So the money we sold those two properties for, we're taking a chunk of that.

Even though we're trying to save for our own remodel, we're going to take a chunk of that and we're looking for a project to give that money to. Maybe it's another small church in our community or somewhere close that we can give them this chunk of money and say, "Hey, we know that you want to do remodels too, and so we want to help you with that." And so I just want you to know that's the generosity of our leaders, our elders, that even though while we're saving, we're also giving as we believe God has called us to do. And so I'm excited for that project to be done so that I can stop talking about it in my vision casting message, all right?

Hopefully, that will be next year. This is the last time I'll have to talk about it. Our next hire or the next position that we're going to look to try to fulfill is a caring pastor. As the church continues to grow, it becomes more and more difficult for myself and the other pastoral staff to be with all of those people that are having surgeries and doing funerals and everything like that. And we want to do the best we can. And I believe that we need to have somebody specifically on staff that does that. It doesn't mean that I'm not going to do that anymore.

Just so you all know, I very much love doing pastoral care and doing those types of things. But unfortunately, there's just a lot of stuff that has to get done. And sometimes I'm unable to do that to the best of my ability. So we're looking for that position. It might be part-time. It might be full-time. We might be moving some things around. But that is the next position or hole that we think we want to do a better job in. You've already seen it on the announcements, but one of the things I'm excited for this fall is a potential mission trip to Liberia.

Brenda Sturry is going to be leading this mission trip. And so if you are interested in doing that, come to the meeting here in a couple of weeks next week. And Donnie Riley, who we've been very connected with for a long time, many of us have sponsored children in Liberia. Many of you have asked for a long time, "When are we going? When are we going to Liberia?" This is the year, all right? So if you're interested, come to that meeting and you will have your opportunity to go to Liberia.

One of the things that we had planned for this year that we've already had to cancel was a trip called the Footsteps of Paul trip. And it was going to be traveling around the Mediterranean area to those countries to visit the areas that the Apostle Paul would have planted churches. And we had planned that trip. We were beginning the process. And then, of course, everything happened in the Middle East. And we just feel even though the companies and organizations are still taking trips, it might be good just to wait a year, all right?

And so we are postponing that until 2025 is our goal for that trip. If that's something you are looking forward to, we do plan on trying to make that happen. Of course, in 2024, we're praying for God to continue to move

and work amongst us that we would see baptisms and salvations. I've already had meetings with multiple people that have told me, "Pastor, took you up on your challenge to be in the Word of God every day." And so my husband and I are going through the Bible in a year, or we're doing this Bible study, we're using your version, all of these other things.

And so lots of encouraging things that are happening in this coming year already, as God is helping us take our next step toward Him.