

# Guiding Statements

Forest Hills Bible Chapel, Issued on 10/27/2017

## Introduction: DNA

DNA is a set of instructions encoded in each living cell that tells it what it is supposed to be and do. DNA makes us who we are.

We want the DNA of Forest Hills Bible Chapel — our Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Core Activities — to serve as a governing code that defines all we are and all we do as a spiritual body. We understand that we do not have the authority to define our church because it belongs to Christ, who is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). Documenting both who we are and who we want to be as a church is an exercise in asking God for direction, seeking it in His Word, and listening to the Spirit.

Therefore, this document is a reforming expression of our controlling conviction that we are under the authority of Christ. We fully acknowledge that we move forward as earthen vessels and learners with a sober realization that in some cases we will try, fail, revise, and try again. However, as we listen to Christ, endeavoring to discern the instruction and guidance of His Word and the Holy Spirit to us in these matters, we believe that Christ is calling us to be the church outlined in these Guiding Statements, and that as a particular local body of believers we are called to use the unique gifts God has given us to proclaim His Kingdom and bless His Church. We look to Christ because He is our Head, and as we hold fast to Him, our whole body will grow with a growth that is from God (Colossians 2:19).

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Branches can only bear fruit by abiding in the Vine. May it be so of Forest Hills Bible Chapel.

*The Elders*

*Forest Hills Bible Chapel*

## Purposes of Guiding Statements

- **Mission** – A brief, overarching statement that answers the question: “Why do we exist?” A tool to unite and direct the church.
- **Core Values** – Short explanations of the foundational things we value as a church. A tool to define and remind us of what is most important.
- **Vision** – A detailed description and brief summary statement of the answers to the questions: “What will the future look like as we fulfill our mission?” and “What will be

different?" A tool to develop a common concept of where we are going and who we want to be. Flows from our Mission and Core Values.

- **Core Activities** – An organizational framework to direct the work of the Chapel members, especially our leaders, as we determine what we will do to carry out the mission and reach the vision. Will be applied and expanded in the forthcoming Implementation Plan.

## Mission

Forest Hills Bible Chapel exists to proclaim the excellencies of God, who called us out of the darkness into His wonderful light.<sup>1</sup>

## Core Values

We are passionate about...

**God** – We believe in the only true and living God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Our hope, faith, and salvation are in Him alone.<sup>2</sup>

**Church Family** – God calls people to belong to Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, and to join with one another as members of His household.<sup>3</sup>

**People** – All people matter to God, and He is seeking to reconcile them to Himself. As people of God and ambassadors for Christ, God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves.<sup>4</sup>

**Scripture** – God has spoken and continues to speak in and through Scripture about Himself and His will for us. The Bible is our final authority for life and faith, teaching us the truth about God as Creator, our rebellion, His work to restore us, and our new life with Him now and forever.<sup>5</sup>

**Gospel** – The Good News of Jesus – His coming as Messiah; His death, burial and resurrection; and His return as Judge and Savior – is the only door through which we can enter into a relationship with God. God calls all people to repent and believe in His Son Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

**Worship** – God is worthy of our enthusiastic praise. As we come to know God, we are moved to display ever-increasing gratitude and love for Him by our words and our lives.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 2:4-5,9-10;1 Tim 3:4-5, 14-15;1 Thess 2:7-12; Gal 4:19-20

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4; Acts 17:24-31; Titus 3:4-7

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1:6; Ephesians 2:14-22; 3:14-21

<sup>4</sup> John 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, Mark 12:28-34

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Romans 3:19-26; Revelation 21:1-4

<sup>6</sup> John 3:16-18; Acts 2:22-41; 4:8-12; Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10,13

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 2:4-10; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 13:15

**Prayer** – God hears and acts when we pray. He invites us to approach Him as children approach their father: in dependence and faith and with persistence.<sup>8</sup>

**Priesthood of All Believers** – God calls all Christians to intercede for each other, to serve one another with our gifts, and to be His witnesses in the world around us in word and life.<sup>9</sup>

**Maturity** – God calls us to be fully devoted followers of Jesus. We seek to become people of Christlike integrity in our character and conduct.<sup>10</sup>

**Unity and Diversity** – God calls believers to be united in their faith, in their pursuit of Christ, and in their acceptance of all those whom God has accepted. “In essentials, unity. In nonessentials, diversity. In all things, charity.”<sup>11</sup>

## Vision

### Introduction

We believe God is calling us to a specific vision for our church family. While by His grace we are doing some things well, we recognize that God is always challenging us – asking us to boldly follow Him wherever He leads. God has given us an idea of where He is taking us, and we greatly desire to go there with Him.

The concept of the priesthood of all believers provides a helpful framework for understanding our vision for our church. As a body of priests, we relate **up** to God the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit, we minister to and intercede for one another **in** the body, and we reach **out** to the world around us as ambassadors for Christ and His kingdom.

In 1 Peter 2:4-5, the apostle Peter tells us, “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

To explain how this concept of the church works, evangelical scholar Timothy George writes, “We stand before God and intercede for one another, we proclaim God’s Word to one another and we celebrate his presence among us in worship, praise, and fellowship. Moreover, our priestly ministry does not terminate upon ourselves. It propels us into the world in service and witness.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 11:1-13; Colossians 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:12, 5:7

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 2:9,12; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Hebrews 13:16; Ephesians 4:7-13; Romans 15:15-16

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:13; 1 John 2:3-6

<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 4:1-6; Romans 14:1-15:13

**Upreach** refers to the act of reaching up to God in worship, which is the very reason we live. We were created to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7), and God seeks worshipers to worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:22-23). We exist to know and delight in the surpassing worth of God in Christ by the Spirit.

*[We] worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:3)*

**Inreach** refers to the act of reaching into the community of worshipers to bring every disciple of Christ to maturity in Christ.

*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (Colossians 1:28)*

**Outreach** refers to our acts as ambassadors for Christ, articulating the Gospel explicitly in word and bearing its fruit in our relationships with people and creation. Our primary task in outreach is to proclaim Jesus as the only way of salvation. As we are transformed by the gospel and, in obedience, desire to see its implications realized, our secondary tasks in outreach are to seek the welfare of our neighbors and to care for God's creation.

*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 28:19-20)*

*He has told you, O man, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)*

*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)*

## Vision Statement

God is calling us to be . . . a priesthood of believers, reaching up to God, reaching inward to each other, and reaching out to our neighbors, both near and far.

## Unpacked Vision

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers," *First Things*, October 31, 2016, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/the-priesthood-of-all-believers>.

As we follow God, we envision Forest Hills Bible Chapel being . . .

. . . a church that reaches up.

. . . a God-honoring church family that is fully devoted to Him. Jesus taught us that a life of devotion is marked by love of God and a joyful and worshipful relationship with Him, and love of others and a merciful and compassionate relationship with them.

. . . a Christ-centered church family that passionately seeks and celebrates our relationship with Jesus. We will fervently strive to allow Christ to be Lord over every sphere of our personal lives and corporate existence.

. . . a Spirit-filled church family that recognizes we can do nothing without His involvement and empowerment. We will open our hearts to His leading, equipping, convicting, and counsel.

. . . a worshiping church family that seeks to lift God's name high in ways that are deeply meaningful for all. We will praise God in awe and reverence, both individually and corporately. Our celebration of the Lord's Supper will center our services on Jesus Christ each week.

. . . a praying church family that approaches God as children approach their father: in dependence and faith and with persistence. We will pray together, corporately and privately, as a church and in small groups, as families and as couples, as friends, and as individuals.

. . . a Scripture-anchored and Scripture-shaped church family that holds firmly to the Word in a culture that is increasingly antagonistic to God's truth. We will equip and exhort families and individuals to engage with and be transformed by the Bible.

. . . a church that reaches in.

. . . a shepherded church family in which the Elders will serve, teach, equip, guide, counsel, and discipline the body faithfully. The Elders will communicate clearly and consistently. The Elders will continue to raise up succeeding generations of shepherds and pass the torch to them.

. . . a committed church family that takes ownership of our distinctive practices. Our teachers and leaders will explain the Scriptural roots of these practices, teach our members our particular way of practicing them, and provide opportunities to participate in them.

. . . a disciplined and discipling church family where each member is a disciple of Jesus, is following and learning from more mature members, and is leading and teaching other less mature members to obey all that Jesus commanded us. Our older fathers and mothers will add teach and equip our younger fathers and mothers to lead and serve their families. We will faithfully try to engage and guide our children and youth in discipling relationships.

. . . a grace-saturated church family in which all people are valued and shown Christlike love. We will share our lives with one another, comforting those who are hurting and helping those

who are struggling. We will build relationships of trust where we can expose our weaknesses and failures, for this is the path to true healing. We will accept, forgive, encourage, serve, and love one another. We will heal broken relationships.

. . . an inclusive church family that cultivates unity, cooperation, and friendships within our church body across all inessential boundaries (age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family, etc.). We will work to open our families and cliques to new relationships and to draw in both our new members and those on the fringes. We will be hospitable to one another.

. . . an equipping church family that offers support and guidance to individuals and families. A primary means of this guidance will be the teaching of the truths of Scripture, as God's living Word transforms our hearts and minds to His likeness. We will also encourage one another in this process of spiritual transformation through biblical counseling, strategic mentoring, seminars, and small group discussions.

. . . a serving church family where 80% of our members are actively working toward the mission of the church while 20% are being refreshed and restored. We will encourage and equip our people to use their spiritual gifts so that we may be a flourishing local instance of the body of Christ.

. . . an alert church family that recognizes our enemy in the schemes of Satan and the desires of our flesh. At this time we recognize accommodation to the world's presuppositions, pornography, entertainment, consumerism, disengagement from face-to-face relationships, and complacency in matters of mercy and justice as threats to the spiritual life and witness of our body. We will address these issues head-on with truth and grace.

. . . a church that reaches out.

. . . a mission-directed church family that sends out members and outreach partners locally, nationally, and to the ends of the earth. We will cultivate a culture of involvement in missions wherever God has placed us corporately and individually.

. . . a collaborative church family that builds long-term connections with other churches and ministries to proclaim and apply the Gospel. We will build these relationships across as many inessential boundaries as we can, practicing hospitality with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will encourage the existing ministry involvements of our members.

. . . a proclamation-oriented church family focused on sharing the good news about Jesus, especially with those who live in Forest Hills and with children. We will also encourage and equip families and individuals to present God's love and truth in their personal spheres of influence. We will nurture and cultivate our gift of evangelism and lift up our evangelists to lead us in our proclamation of the Gospel. We will be hospitable to our neighbors.

. . . a caring church family that extends mercy to and seeks justice for those who are suffering and oppressed, especially those who live in Forest Hills and children. We will use our most

common spiritual gift of helping to serve our neighbors. We will practice collaboration as envisioned above.

. . . a growing church family in which we regularly welcome a harvest of new believers who join our body as members. We will strive for congregational growth, acknowledging that regeneration is a work of the Spirit and that we must be faithful in our commitment to the Great Commission whether or not it results in numerical growth.

## Core Activities

These core activities are a framework to help us organize the work of the church. Some of these activities are essential for every church while others are distinctive to the pursuit of the specific mission and vision that God has given us. These activities will be explained and expanded in the forthcoming Implementation Plan.

### Overarching

- 1) Holding Fast to What the Bible Teaches
- 2) Eldership
- 3) Ministry Leadership

### Upreach

- 4) Worship
- 5) Prayer – Up, In, and Out
- 6) Lord's Supper Celebrated Weekly
- 7) Teaching from Multiple Voices
- 8) Baptism

### Inreach

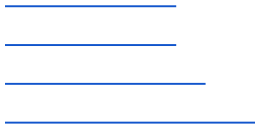
- 9) Congregational Care
  - a) Church Membership, Shepherding, and Discipline
  - b) Counseling
  - c) Caring for the Vulnerable
  - d) Bearing One Another's Burdens
  - e) Rejoicing Together
  - f) Weddings and Baby Dedications
- 10) Edifying and Equipping
  - a) Christian Education
  - b) Leadership Development
  - c) Equipping for Cultural Engagement
  - d) Small Groups
  - e) Discipling and Mentoring

### 11) Stewardship of Resources

### Outreach

- 12) Individuals, Families, and Small Groups
- 13) Corporate
- 14) Sending and Supporting

## References



## Outside Resources

- <http://www.chriscastaldo.com/2011/10/27/five-models-of-the-church/>
- <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2011/05/16/new-testament-metaphors-for-the-church/>
- <https://bethlehem.church/new-here/about-us/#about-our-church-our-history>
  - These materials from Bethlehem Baptist, where John Piper was an Elder, inspired and influenced us.
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-1-what-church-various-scriptures>
- [The Priesthood of All Believers](#) by Timothy George, on First Things, 10/31/16
- <http://www.glennsmithcoaching.com/mission-vs-vision-whats-difference/>