

SPECIAL EDITION

PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 13



A MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR

What you are reading in this special edition of The Partnership Newsletter is the culmination of nearly five years of work. I remember a meeting of our key leaders in early 2015 in which we spent a significant amount of time talking about our values. The immediate outcome of those discussions was only a recognition that much more work needed to be done. Over the next five years there were at least two other significant attempts to identify a set of values for our faith community which moved the needle a little. It wasn't until last year, however, that we finally got a handle on what we were trying to do and our values came into focus.

There are five values we believe God is inviting us to adopt: **On-Purpose**, **Big-Hearted**, **Whole-Life Learners**, **Others-Focused**, and **Trust-Worthy.** What we mean by each of these will be expanded on in the following pages.* It has been a long process but one where I see the fingerprints of God. These values are not just a list of aspirational words but are an extension of the kind of community God is inviting us to be. As you read this issue I hope that you hear the invitation these values contain and that you begin to share my excitement at the promise they hold to shape our expression of community at GBC.

*These values will also be explored more fully in our sermon series entitled *The Crux of Community: The Values That Shape Us.*

God Bless, Marc YOU ARE HERE

Each year we select a theme for the year; a special focus for our community of faith over that year. Our theme for 2020 is "You Are Here" which reflects a double invitation. On the one hand, it invites us to remember where we are and to be present wherever we find ourselves. I don't know about you, but sometimes I can be so absorbed in what I am going to do or where I am going that I am not present where I actually am. On the other hand, it is also an invitation to remember that wherever we are God is there too. If we can be present and aware that God is where we are, then we create space where we might be better placed to hear the invitation of the Spirit to join in with what God is doing. The logo for "You Are Here" reflects this double invitation. The location pin represents us and the inverted pin in the shape of a flame; reminiscent of the Holy Spirit's coming on Pentecost.

It is my hope and prayer that this theme might shape our experience of God's presence and activity wherever we find ourselves; in our families, in our neighbourhoods, in our clubs, in our workplaces, etc. Everywhere we go God is at work and inviting us to join Him in his work of restoring and renewing the world in Christ Jesus.

Are you ready?

WHY VALUES?

The journey to identify values for our community of faith stems from the simple fact that values drive culture. "Culture" can be defined as "how we do things around here" and as a leadership we were keen to develop values that would drive the kind of culture that is in line with our sense of who God is inviting us to be. And it was, in fact, our growing clarity around God's invitation to us as a community of faith that was especially helpful.

If, as we believe, our purpose is to join in with God's plans to restore and renew all things in Christ there were certain behaviours – driven by particular values – that flowed from that purpose. For instance, if we are going to join in with God then we need to create margin in our lives to facilitate that participation. This requires deliberate, conscious, **On-Purpose** decisions about our time, resources, and relationships. Each of the values flow from who we believe God is calling us to be. In this sense, each of the values are expressions of discipleship; what it means to follow Jesus everywhere we go and in everything we do. This discipleship context also means that these are not values for Sundays or specific church ministry only. One of our key considerations was how these values would play out in our everyday life as followers of Jesus. The values needed to be as relevant in our families, neighbourhoods, schools, and work as they might be "in church". For example, being **Big-Hearted** is as applicable in our workplaces as it is at church and as important to our relationships as it is to our finances. Each of the values – and the behaviours they promote – are worded in non-religious language to attempt to reflect their everyday nature.

Finally, because these are values for a community of faith seeking to be who God is inviting us to be, we didn't feel it necessary to "value" the non-negotiables of faith. We are a Christian community. We'd hope it goes without saying that we value Jesus' redemptive work, prayer, mission, worship, the Bible, etc. and these things are evident in our behaviours as a community of faith.

With that background in mind, let's explore the five values in more detail...

We'll be On-Purpose creating margin in our lives to join in with what God's doing.

As a community of faith we want to foster an ever-increasing awareness of God's activity and the Spirit's invitation to join in with that transforming work in Jesus. This requires a heart and mind focused on God that is attentive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, but more than that, it requires that we create and maintain margin and space in our lives. In the busyness of life we often lack the necessary space and time to even recognise the invitation of God around us, let alone the room in our lives to take up that invitation.

I have always been struck by Jesus' life. There were times when he was incredibly busy (Mark 6:31) and yet he never feels rushed. Instead he always seems to know precisely what the Father was inviting him to do at precisely the right time. The kind of attentiveness to the Father is something to aspire to as we have been given the same Spirit that was at work in Jesus and have access to the Father through the work of Jesus and is a "spiritual competency" that we should foster in our lives.

However, it will not be enough to hear the invitation of God if we don't have any margin in our life to respond. Part of the cost of following Jesus may be to say No to more in order that we might say Yes more readily to Him.

Margin in our lives may mean that we are able to volunteer in ministries and charities that are engaged in kingdom work, but it may also mean that we have the space to build relationships with those in our sphere of influence or to have the emotional margin to actually notice those around us.

∕Ve′ll be **Big-Hearted** being generous in everything and in every way.

Generosity is measured in more than quantities, extends beyond finances, and flows from a heart that has been transformed by Jesus. When our hearts are open, generosity in all its forms, is a natural outcome. Consider your attitudes towards your family or closest friends. If they were in need – any need – you would no doubt do whatever you could to help. And when our generosity flows from an open heart, we have absolutely no interest in being repaid. The chance to help, the opportunity to express love and care and concern is reward enough.

We believe God is inviting us into this sort of big-hearted generosity; imitating and extending his generosity to the world He loves and has promised to restore and renew. This Big-Heartedness will flow into every interaction. It will be self-sacrificial - actually costing us because we are part of God's plans and

purposes – but without interest in repayment or tit-for-tat transactions of niceties with those we like. It will certainly be financial, but will extend to all our resources (e.g., time or skills). It will be holistic and relational; we will be generous with our forgiveness and compassion towards those with whom we disagree.

We believe God is inviting us into this sort of big-hearted generosity

Being **Big-Hearted** is another way we say Yes to God's invitation to participate in what he is doing in the world and involves those inside and outside the community of faith. It is something we can cultivate everywhere we go and in everything we do.

We'll be **Anole-Life Learners**

committed to curiosity and humility in all areas of life.

Following Jesus is a whole-life adventure that will always hold more for us to learn and put into practice. Commitment to participating in this adventure requires that we never get too comfortable with comfort but that we continually strive to see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly.

Humility and curiosity are critical ingredients to being **Whole-Life Learners**. Humility keeps us from arrogance; assuming we know all there is to know. It opens us to learn from anyone and provides the courage to try, and sometimes fail, at new things. Humility also implies a willingness to express vulnerability about what we do not know, cannot do, and the fear and discomfort that learning involves. We will lean into this discomfort as it is more important to grow than to be comfortable. Curiosity drives learning and encourages us to keep our minds and hearts open to differences. It keeps us from a response of fear, but invites questions and listening.

Humility also implies a willingness to express vulnerability about what we do not know

This is as true in faith as it is in every area of life but we will be committed to be **Whole-Life Learners** in every other area of life as an extension of our commitment to follow Jesus believing that Jesus invites us to ongoing growth. We have been created to learn and to grow, and to do so reflects the plans and purposes of God.

We'll be Others-Focused

seeking to serve others and put them first.

On the night He was betrayed Jesus took a towel and washed His disciples' feet; taking the posture of a servant. For, as He himself said about His ministry, He had come to serve rather than to be served. To be **Others-Focused** is our attempt to imitate Jesus.

A posture is unconscious; it's how we stand or sit when we're not thinking about it. As a community of faith we want to have an unconscious, default posture of service and selfless love. This posture will be evident in our actions and our attitudes which will be focused on those we are loving and serving. We will not assume we know what people want or need nor will we do things that make us feel good but which do not meet their needs. Like good servants, we will be attentive to the needs of those around us and be concerned to meet them. We will not assume we know what people want or need nor will we do things that make us feel good but which do not meet their needs

We will love and serve without condition; not requiring belief or faith from those in our wider community, workplaces, schools, and family before we serve. We will reach out in the hope that selfless love and service might lead to an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus, but we will not make it a condition of our love or service.

We'll be **Trust-Worthy** <u>known as consistent, safe and non-anxious.</u>

As followers of Jesus we believe some big stuff. We believe that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We believe that God will do what He has promised; renewing and restoring all things. We believe that God is in control and that, in the midst of all the chaos of our world, He is not threatened by it, but continues to draw all things together in Christ.

We will be a safe place for those who are journeying towards faith

As a community of faith, we will seek to reflect these attributes and characteristics of God in our behaviour. We will practise integrity; doing what we say we will do. We will seek to be consistent; being the same on Sundays as we are on Mondays. We will be predictable in the best sense of the word; predictable to build confidence. We will be a safe place; safe for children, for the disabled, for the aged, for those who are vulnerable and marginalised. We will joyfully fulfil legislation as a way to develop trust with those who do not trust the Church. We will practice transparency and be willing to acknowledge our mistakes. We will be an example for other churches and other non-religious groups.

We will be a safe place for those who are journeying towards faith; those who have questions and doubts and whose life does not yet reflect a relationship with Jesus. We will be willing to allow them the time to ask questions, process answers, and grow in faith and will not rush them. We will trust God's timing, but will also have an environment that regularly invites people to take a safe risk and take steps of faith.

THANK YOU

HOPEFIELD

As a ministry of GBC, an important aspect of Hopefield's service delivery is the transformation of communities seeing the Kingdom come. There are many avenues for this work and one particular focus in the coming months will be a renewed emphasis on the issue of domestic violence (DV) and trauma.

Last September GBC raised money for Hopefield to employ a trauma/domestic violence (DV) counsellor for two days/week. Since then there have been 17 new clients attend Hopefield to see this counsellor. Across these clients there are 24 children and five of these children are also engaged with therapeutic support. This group has had 76 sessions. Your support, either directly or indirectly through GBC, has facilitated bringing transformation and God's kingdom to these families. We at Hopefield are extremely grateful and thankful for your prayers and financial support. The true value of this work lies in the outcomes. These include a woman being able to go to the shops by herself for the first time; a child overcoming anxiety brought on from witnessing family violence to being able to attend camp; and a mum who has become more aware of the relationship dynamics and has developed healthy co-parenting skills in a previously abusive relationship.

We also recognize that there is much more to do. Church, and indeed communities as a whole, need to be safe places for people who have experienced trauma and/or DV, and this responsibility rests with us all. To this end, Hopefield is delighted to be working collaboratively with GBC on exploring the development of a suite of programs and tools that empower Christian communities in becoming safe spaces for all people. After all, the church should be the greatest representation of kingdom life.

FINANCES

One of the ways God invites us to participate in His plans and purposes is to financially support kingdom work. As a community of faith our ability to say Yes to God's plans is enabled by the financial gifts of those committed to the vision of GBC to see lives changed by Jesus.

As a reflection of our values, our financial stewardship is a reflection of being **On-Purpose** as we create margin in our finances to be able to respond with **Big-Hearted** generosity in our desire to be **Others-Focused** so that they can experience the transforming power of Jesus and join in God's work with us.

We encourage those who are financially committed to the vision of GBC to consider giving electronically. Our bank details are below and there is more information about giving on GBC Links under the Give tab.

Thank you for your participation in the good news (Phil. 1:5).

More details on how to begin giving are available on GBC Links. We encourage electronic giving.

Bank: Baptist Financial Services Account: Gymea Baptist Church BSB No: 704 922 Account No: 100 006 024

