

QUO VADIS CBCC?

Visioning or Vanishing?

April 30, 2006



Matthew 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. **“You are the light of the world.** A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one, **after lighting a lamp,** puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others,** so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. **Proverbs 29:18 ~ KJV: “Where There Is No Vision, The People Perish,** But He That Keepeth The Law, Happy Is He”

Today is the culmination of many months of hard and honest work, mostly behind the scenes. Men and women who love and deeply care for their church have studied, discussed, sought direction and finally agreed on what should be done in order to reach our Commu-

nity with an unchanging message in a changing world!

There were also the lighter moments. When we wondered if enough people would be willing to participate in our outreach to the community, the story came up about the young lad who attentively listened to the scripture readings every week. He asked, **“Well, the Bible says that the children of Israel crossed the red sea – the children of Israel built the temple – the children of Israel did this and the children of Israel did that. Please tell me, the lad said, “Didn’t the grownups ever do anything?”** We also discussed the fact that the challenges and opportunities are so great that we never need to compete with other Churches. Someone then told about **a Methodist preacher and a Baptist preacher who were fierce competitors.** Their churches were across the street from each other and were roughly the same size. They were constantly vying for the attention of the community and, unfortunately, the competition had caused quite a bit of tension between them. A prominent leader in the community wanted to see the two pastors get together **in a spirit of cooperation and love.** Therefore, he paid for the two of **them to go on a hunting trip together** to the Rockies. For several days, they shared the same small tent and cooked their meals over the same small fire. A good spirit of camaraderie developed between them. Until one night, they heard **a giant grizzly bear clawing at their tent.** They realized that the bear was **furious.** The Methodist Preacher yelled, **“Let’s run for it!”** The Baptist preacher protested. **“You can’t outrun a grizzly,”** The Methodist yelled, **“Come on, I don’t have to; I only need to outrun you! 😊**

As Jesus was teaching his earliest followers, he was also providing the foundation for future generations, every age, and time, **for centuries to come**. Jesus commands his followers to be the **"salt of the earth"** and the **"light of the world."** Nothing has changed. It is still true, **"Jesus is calling us again today to be the "salt and light."** We still have the very same Lord and Master.

If I believed that these comments were no longer true, I would have **no single other reason** for standing here today! Question is, **"What does it mean to be the salt and light in the year 2006?"** In the ancient world **salt** was a valuable commodity. **Salt** was used to preserve food in the days before refrigeration. **Salt** was also used as an antiseptic to clean out wounds. This sounds painful, but cleaning out a wound with **salt** is very effective in fighting infection. Like **salt**, said Jesus, my followers **will serve, preserve, cleanse, and protect God's people**.

Jesus also challenged his followers to be **"the light of the world"**. Jesus told his followers. "A city built on a hill cannot be hid." Like a beam of light shining through the darkness, modern day followers of Jesus stand out and are visible for the entire community to see. **Our temptation is to allow our light to shine only for those inside our church, while ignoring people outside.**

A true church of Jesus Christ steps beyond the boundaries of its own Sanctuary and membership. We concluded that a **vision** without a **task** is only an empty dream; a **task** without a **vision** is drudgery; a **vision and a task** is the **hope** of the world. Peter Marshall said, **"Give us clear vision that we may know where to stand and what to stand for, because unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything."**

Hebrew Scripture talks **to us** about Visioning or Vanishing. **"Where there is no vision, the people perish."** **Our visions shape us. Our visions control us. Our visions are determining factors in who and what we become.**

Our visions or lack of vision determines our interests, our directions, our finances, and affects the totality of the human experience. No part is left untouched by its influence. **Unless a Church has a shared vision, in due time, it will be forced to close its doors and cease to exist.**

We cannot live in the past or live off its memories. We can not even blame our problems on others and say that God has called them and not us to address those problems. If we claim to be God's people – we need to focus on **God's power and purpose for the Church**. Anybody can curse the darkness, **but people of faith rather light candles to defy the darkness.**

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and all those who **served so very well** in this Church before, a challenge comes to us today to act upon our visions rather than to vanish as many other churches do in our time. **Quo Vadis, Domine?** Master, where are you heading? The choice is ours today. Let us follow the lead of Jesus Christ!

- Sixty-four years in this place have shaped **us to be open and welcoming for our entire Community without "unwelcome" signals of any kind.** If we have no vision for our Church's **specific identity, message, mission, place, and calling in our Community**, our Church will vanish from this area. **"Where there is no vision ... the people shall perish!"**
- If we have no passion and vision **for the hungry, homeless, helpless and hopeless**, our Church and ministry will be nothing **but a worship club, a place where people play religion like in a concert and we will no longer be the body of Christ at work in the world.** **"Where there is no vision ... the people perish!"**
- If there is no vision **for fairness and justice for those who cannot speak for themselves**, there will only be cries of anguish and powerlessness. Then we will do nothing to challenge every form of injustice in our community.
- If we have no vision for the **development of our faith, and if we do not accept the call**

for dynamic Christian action, then our beloved Church will certainly lose its identity, mission and vision and be a Church of Jesus Christ no more!

- If we fail to act upon our Vision! If we fail to fulfill our mission ~~ this Church will become only a museum for saints rather than a haven where living waters flow and where people find wholeness and wellness as a launching pad to reach the lost and unsaved for Christ.

The church is not intended to be an infirmary for sick people, but to be a health club, a wellness center where people come to get well and stay strong so that they can go back, time and time again, back into the world to respond to the challenge direct from the lips of our Lord and Savior:

**You are the salt of the earth ~ you are the light of the world!
With this vision we cannot, we shall not perish!**

AMEN