



Dear Hope Covenant Church,

November 17, 2019

It has been my absolute privilege to become Lead Pastor here at Hope Covenant. The last three months have been a whirlwind of learning, listening and beginning to lead us into the future. I am deeply grateful for the posture of hospitality and openness to new ideas that I have felt since coming here in August. I was initially intrigued by the call to Hope Covenant because this was a church that wanted to continue to be missional. I was excited by the opportunity to lead and invite God to take us well beyond our own ability into a healthy and missional future. In my first sermon, I offered us the language of “crossing over” as the Israelites moved into the Promised Land. This is not to suggest that Hope was wandering before but rather that we are being called into a new and vitally important season for our church. As I have been praying and dreaming about this upcoming year, I keep coming back to the word “vision”. I believe this is going to be an extremely important word for us as we listen for and act on the gospel impulses that shape our identity as the church. We are inviting God to give us vision in the way we see ourselves, our neighbor and our community. We are inviting God to give us vision as a church to reach our neighborhood in a compelling and meaningful way. We are inviting God to give us vision for St. Cloud State University and the thousands of college students that walk the streets around our building. We are inviting God to give us fresh vision around discipleship that takes place here at Hope, for children’s ministry and youth ministry as well as ministry to families, and ultimately a bigger perspective of the kingdom of God and the part each of us plays in that.

A few people have said to me over the past couple of months, “Hope has strategic priorities, but doesn’t have a strategic plan”. My goal over the first 90 days was to listen carefully, take our strategic priorities and put some plans around them. The document that follows this letter is a living document, a strategic vision to help us live into the priorities that came from the vitality process. It is a living document in the sense that things could change and shift as we invite God to further clarify the vision He has for us.

However, here is the deal; a plan like the one in this document is not simply for the staff to execute or the leadership team to pull off. This is a strategic plan that is deeply dependent on the entire body of Christ. We need the congregation this year to not only buy into the plan and vision for 2020 but to join in where gifting and passions allow. We need our congregation to continue to help us in children’s ministry, youth ministry, college ministry, ministry to seniors, facilities, hospitality, teaching, leading, marketing, stewardship, and participation to name a few! I invite you to review the strategic plan within the pages that follow and pray about it. In fact, I encourage Hope Covenant to really take the next seven days (Nov 17– 24) and commit them to prayer, inviting God to speak, inspire and direct our path as a church. This is an exciting time for Hope and I invite you to join me in seeking God’s movement as we journey forward together!

In Him,
Pastor Brian

Strategic Plan 2020

Hope Covenant

Introduction: Hope Covenant is a growing church built on the hard work of the past 10 years to become healthy and missional. By “healthy” we mean *pursuing Christ*. By “missional” we mean *pursuing Christ’s priorities in the world*. The ECC has identified 10 healthy/missional markers for churches. Even though every church is different, these markers can be used to determine a church’s general level of health and vitality.

1. Centrality on the Word of God
2. Life transforming walk with Jesus
3. Intentional evangelism
4. Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy and justice ministry
5. Global perspective and engagement
6. Compelling Christian community
7. Heartfelt worship
8. Sacrificial and generous living and giving
9. Culture of godly leadership
10. Fruitful organizational structures

In the course of becoming healthy and missional (growing stronger and more proficient in the 10 markers above), three strategic priorities rose to the surface. These strategic priorities shape the way we leverage our resources in order to become a healthy missional church. While we would love to improve all areas of ministry at Hope Covenant, it is important to lay out key areas that will have the greatest initial impact on the trajectory of Hope.

These three areas include:

1. Worship on Sunday Morning
 - a. Vibrant worship
 - b. Pathways for connection and integration
 - c. Biblical and relevant preaching
2. Family Ministry
 - a. Intergenerational ministry
 - b. Dynamic Youth and Children’s Ministry
 - c. Ministry initiatives for families, parents and marriages
3. College Ministry
 - a. Becoming good neighbors with St. Cloud State University
 - b. Connecting with Para-church college ministry
 - c. Becoming a church that college students find engaging and welcoming

Beginning with VISION

A vision statement speaks to purpose or existence of an organization. As it currently stands, Hope Covenant’s vision statement is “Following Jesus into the Father’s love...
...sharing the Spirit’s life with the least of us.” This was put forth as our vision statement under previous pastoral leadership and it reflects beautiful language about God’s love, following Jesus and the work of the Spirit. Here though are some initial concerns:

1. I am not sure what this statement really means.
2. It is not memorable.
3. I am not sure the language is accessible to folks on the outside of the Christian faith.
4. It does not reflect the language of hope.

Recommendation: Revise our vision statement to become more accessible and memorable by all people. Example (not final version): ***We exist to be Hope for the life of the world.***

What is it that we do at Hope Covenant?

I think there is value in distilling down what it means to be a part of the community of Hope Covenant. These high-level markers shape both the identity and activity of our community. At our most basic level at Hope Covenant, we:

1. **Gather...** as a community of imperfect Jesus followers for the purpose of worship. Worship becomes this whole life response to God and to the restorative work done through Jesus Christ.

Psalm 75:1; *We praise you, God, we praise you, for your name is near; people tell of your wonderful deeds.*

2. **Grow...** into the likeness of Christ. Discipleship becomes a life-long journey of pursuing Christ and the adopting of His priorities as our own.

Philippians 2:5; *In your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.*

3. **Go...** out as sent people into our world with a message that is good news for all people. We believe that Jesus came and then he sent his people out to carry out his work into all the world.

Luke 5:11; *Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."*

Core Values (What guides and shapes the way we think and live out our call as a church)

1. **God's Word:** We believe the Bible shapes the way we understand ourselves, our creator and the way we live out faith in our daily lives.
2. **Generous Orthodoxy:** We embrace our foothold on the major elements of our faith (Orthodoxy) while embracing freedom, listening and even disagreement on non-salvific issues. In the end, our position towards others is filtered through the lens of generosity, humility and listening.
3. **The Good News is actually good news:** We believe that Good News that is embodied in the person and teaching of Jesus is really good and points all people towards abundant life, reconciliation, justice, mercy, human thriving and God's glory.
4. **All people matter:** We believe that every person is made in the image of God and will be treated as such. We also value being an intergenerational community that learns from each other and does life together. We also believe that people matter more than programs.
5. **Embrace the journey:** Every person is on a journey of faith. We value being a place where people can wrestle with God and grow deeper in their journey with Jesus.
6. **Questions are gifts:** We believe Jesus loved to ask questions to help people grapple with the mysteries of faith. We embrace questions and critical thinking in the journey of following Jesus.

7. **Healthy culture matters:** We promote a healthy church culture which means we practice believing the best in each other. When conflicts and disagreement surface, reconciliation is our goal through direct communication, seeking and extending forgiveness, humility, patience, and grace towards one another.
8. **Reconciliation matters:** We believe that at the heart of the Gospel there is a call for reconciliation. As we invite God’s word and the Holy Spirit to be active in our church, we embrace this reconciliation work in all areas of our lives.
9. **Church on mission:** As we pursue Christ and His priorities, we more fully discover our mission to go into our world with the hope of the gospel both locally and globally.
10. **Spirit-led sensitivity:** We believe that God has been and continues to work in the lives of ordinary people. Our desire is to listen and follow Christ wherever and to whomever he calls us.

Three Strategic Priorities + 1

As indicated above, three strategic priorities have emerged through Hope Covenant’s revitalization process. These priorities include Sunday worship, family ministry and college ministry. In the process of discernment, a fourth priority has emerged. It has become clear that we need to engage strategically around our senior (60+) population. In order for us to pursue an effective ministry approach towards young people and young families, we need to create a balanced investment in a faithful demographic who have supported this church through its many ebbs and flow. The following is an “living” strategic approach to our four priorities:

Overarching Goal: By investing into these four strategic priorities our goal is to advance on our journey of becoming a healthy and missional church.

Financial Implication of this strategic plan:

Strategic Priority	Initiative	Expense	Status
Family Ministry	Technology upgrades	\$3,000	Spent
Family Ministry	Youth Ministry One-year Grant	\$5,500	Pending
Worship Ministry	Seasonal decor	\$500	Pending
Total		\$ 9,000	

*These funds would come out of our expansion and growth fund not regular giving.

Strategic Priority # 1: Family Ministry

Define the Priority: By family ministry we are talking about a strategic focus on children, youth, parents/parenting, intergenerational relationship and marriage ministry.

Priority Outcomes:

1. A church that intentionally values young people and families and is creating both space and opportunity to be a part of the larger faith community at Hope.
2. A church that fosters rich intergenerational relationships.
3. A church that cares for marriage and parents. This investment not only moves us towards becoming a healthier church but also creates great on-ramps for new families to join the community at Hope.
4. A church that has an excellent children's ministry with the tools and resources to effectively disciple children. We want to become a church where children have such a good time; they are the ones pulling their parents to come to church on Sunday morning.
5. A church that has an excellent youth ministry with the tools and resources to effectively disciple middle and high school students. Again, we want to become a church where our young people feel like they belong and are given the tools to grow in their journey of faith.

Strategic Steps for 2019-2020:

1. Adjust the age segmentation to align with school system and critical mass.
 - a. 6th grade moves into student ministry.
 - b. Adjustment to children ministry groupings that foster better learning and greater critical mass.
 - c. Status: completed September 2019
2. Technology upgrade.
 - a. Replace all current TVs with wall mounted flat screen TVs.
 - Current TVs are on carts creating safety hazards in case of tipping.
 - Replacement TVs have smart TV ability.
 - b. Replace all current VHS and DVD players with Blu-ray.
 - c. Improve Wi-Fi infrastructure to ensure TVs and computers can access streaming content.
 - d. Cost: \$3000 (coming out of the expansion fund)
 - e. Status: Completed October 2019
3. How to Grow a Connected Family.
 - a. Sunday morning presentation followed by afternoon seminars.
 - b. This was a family ministry initiative focusing on parenting, family dynamics
 - c. Survey was sent out to gain feedback and new ideas for next steps.
 - d. Status: Completed October 2019
4. A standard lifestyle guideline for all leaders (including Sunday School Teachers).
 - a. The goal is to raise the bar for all leaders who are working with our young people.
 - b. Status: Completed September 2019 (shared with ministry teams and leaders within the church)
5. A commitment to volunteer development.
 - a. Increased training.
 - b. Intentional affirmation.
 - c. Consistent communication.
 - d. Raising the profile and value of our teachers in front of congregation.
 - e. Access to better resources.
 - f. Increased technology accessibility.
 - g. Status: Ongoing, major focus for 2020.

6. Parenting/marriage enrichment.
 - a. Adult Sunday school classes planned for winter/spring 2020.
 - b. Invite a team of people who care about promoting healthy marriage and improving as parents to dream about future events and experiences.
 - c. Explore a mom's group here at Hope.
 - d. Explore a marriage enrichment retreat in the future.
 - e. Promote marriage and parenting resources with greater visibility.
 - f. Develop a family sermon series.
 - g. Status: Ongoing focus for 2020
7. Increase youth ministry budget and augment fundraising strategy.
 - a. Youth ministry at Hope has grown considerably in both attendance and in financial need. In order to effectively disciple and program for a group that is averaging 30+, we need to increase our resource allocation.
 - Step 1: Increase youth ministry budget from \$3,600 to \$4,000.
 - Step 2: Fundraise approximately \$5000 annual to cover ministry expenses and increase capacity for subsidy and access to experience like retreats, mission trips and discipleship trips.
 - b. Augment our fundraising strategy to focus our fundraising efforts primarily on children and youth.
 - Spring time fundraiser: Focus is on children's ministry and every kid a camper.
 - Fall fundraiser: Focus is on youth ministry and making trips, retreats and serve experiences more accessible.
 - c. Proposed plan.
 - 2020: One-time gift from expansion fund to youth ministry in the amount of \$5000.00 to support growth.
 - Fall 2020: Fall fundraiser with a target number of \$4000-5000 raised.
 - d. Status: 2020 project
8. Provide ministry support staff for worship and youth ministry.
 - a. Rationale
 - Increased emphasis on youth and family ministry as the pathway to a growing church.
 - 35% increase in youth ministry attendance (Wednesday night).
 - Capacity for deep sustainable discipleship is stretched by the demands of maintaining two ministry areas (worship and youth ministry).
 - b. Internship Focus
 - Administrative ministry tasks as assigned.
 - Relationship discipleship with our young male students.
 - Event and "relationship focused" event development.
 - Sunday morning worship support (musician preferred, technology help).
 - c. 12 hours per week
 - 8 hours devoted to youth ministry.
 - 4 hours devoted to worship ministry.
 - d. Supervised by Rachel but invested in by Lead Pastor as well.
 - e. Status: Pending
9. Build strong Hope Covenant "on-ramps" through children's ministry.

- a. We believe that having an effective, relevant and engaging children’s ministry is going to be one of best assets for growth.
 - Technology upgrade (see above).
 - Efficient and effective welcome and check in process for new families.
 - Altering our once a month Wednesday night program to a once a month weekend experience that is designed to be attractive/accessible to all children and would be a great on ramp for new families.
 - Pumpkin Mania
 - Smaller events like a Leprechaun Hunt Nerf War, Hope sponsored trip to a corn maze, Christmas cookie decorating, etc.
 - Fostering experiential learning in classroom.
 - Curriculum that is bible-story based.
 - Ongoing volunteer leader training and development.
 - b. Status: Ongoing
10. Facilities improvement: Making strategic improvements to our building in order to make our space more inviting to guest and more conducive to dynamic discipleship.
- a. Re-energize the facilities team with fresh vision and new initiatives.
 - b. Improve signage around building.
 - c. Look into possible long-term solutions for bathrooms nearer to sanctuary for easier access. (that doesn’t involve going into a class room).
 - d. De-cluttering space with old or outdated items.
 - e. Improve technology in classrooms (completed).
 - f. Brighten up space with a more modern look (classrooms, entry way).
 - g. Visit other churches to see how they are creating space for children and youth.
 - h. Status: Focus 2020

Strategic Priority # 2: Sunday Morning Worship

Define the Priority: Our priority is to create a meaningful and vibrant worship experience on Sunday morning.

Priority Outcomes:

1. A worship experience that is intentional, meaningful and inspiring.
2. A worship experience (songs) that gives voice to our diversity while primarily contemporary in nature in order to draw new families in.
3. A worship service that leads people deeper in their walk with Jesus and further in their mission to live out the gospel. (Deeper in Christ, further in missional)
4. Worship that is intergenerational and accessible to a wide span of generations.
5. Preaching that is engaging, biblical, challenging and relevant for today.
6. An excellent children’s ministry option during the sermon for families to choose.

Strategic Steps for 2019-2020

1. Continue the adjustment of sound for purpose of balance and volume.
 - a. This adjustment includes listening for balance between vocals and instrumentation.
 - b. This adjustment includes monitoring and testing various volume levels and its effect on the energy of the worship experience and discomfort with those who have hearing aids or sensitively to sounds.

- c. Continue investing in professional sound person until a volunteer with training steps forward.
 - d. Advanced Ministry Technology came in and did an initial evaluation and proposal of a fill speak that could help with some of the sound imbalance in the sanctuary.
 - e. Status: Ongoing
2. Add Seasonal Décor
 - a. Adjust stage décor to reflect seasons for meaningful worship experience.
 - b. Remaining 2019 expense comes from Expansion fund (\$500).
 - c. 2020 expense comes from budget.
 - d. Status: Fall is wrapping up, Advent/Christmas is next.
3. Continue to find intergenerational opportunities on Sunday morning
 - a. Mystery Box
 - b. Different voices reading scripture
 - c. Testimony and sharing from various ages
 - d. Videos and visuals during sermon
 - e. Special musical pieces by children and adults
 - f. Status: Ongoing focus for 2020.
4. Creativity in worship
 - a. Serve Sundays or focused Sundays on specific projects or initiatives
 - b. Spiritual practices in service
 - c. Special guests and testimonies
 - d. Integration of the visual and musical arts
 - e. Status: Ongoing for 2020
5. Improvement of user experience
 - a. Sound improvement (see above)
 - b. Improve visual experience
 - Explore the cost and logistics around a large drop-down screen/large TV screen to enhance the sight lines and visual experience for those in the center section of the sanctuary.
 - Progress: Advanced Ministry Technology came in did an initial evaluation and proposal a new TV/screen/project for the sanctuary.
 - c. Improve lighting in sanctuary
 - Progress: A lighting expert has looked at the sanctuary and given an initial estimate.
 - d. Creative thinking around the platform seating section that would offer a different kind of Sunday morning experience.
 - High top tables instead of just chairs for people who would be drawn to a café style experience.
6. Equipping and training for worship teams
 - a. Continue in-house training
 - Offered October 2019
 - b. Invest in offsite training through worship conferences that are local and easily accessible.
7. Growth through marketing
 - a. Expand the reach and invitation to Hope through:
 - Branded apparel (“See Ya Sunday” was just a start)
 - Creative social media engagement (Facebook and Instagram)

- Podcasts
- Signage in and around community
- b. Status update
 - Branded apparel is in the works.
 - Signage is being designed.
 - Daily Facebook posts are going out.
 - Marketing team has been developed and is meeting.
- 8. Continued investment and utilization in the Worship Advisory team
 - a. This team was re-constituted in spring of 2019 in large part to design guidelines for worship team members.
 - b. Continue utilizing the worship advisory team as a supporting sounding board for Rachel and the worship ministry at Hope.

Strategic Priority # 3: College Ministry

Define the Priority: Develop a vibrant and sustainable ministry to college students, specifically but not limited to St. Cloud State University.

Priority Outcomes:

1. Determine needs of today's college students.
2. Build around Hope Covenant's geography to St. Cloud State.
3. Work with interested ministry partners and para-church organizations.
4. Develop a ministry model that leverages Hope Covenant's skills and is sustainable for the long term.

Strategic Steps for 2019-2020

1. Create listening spaces to identify need of current college students that are connected to the ministry of Hope Covenant.
 - a. Plan: Initiate an afternoon lunch/Sunday evening dinner at Lead Pastor's house for purpose of fellowship and listening.
 - b. Additional plans and events will come out of a period of listening and determining needs of Hope Covenant.
 - c. Status: Meal planned for November 10.
2. Develop dream team to establish focus and early test ideas
 - a. The team was established and met twice. (Kirsten W., Barb S., Glenn S., Nicole C., Jesse H.)
 - b. The result of our initial dream team meeting moved us to partner closely with InterVarsity and find ways to be a great church home for St. Cloud college students. This strategy is focused on integrating students into the life of the church and leveraging our location near campus as opposed to creating a separate ministry program for college students.
 - c. In addition to the international dinner (hosted in late Aug) we would like to launch a ministry event for college students during finals week. This one-night event (Study Day) creates space for studying, connecting, getting off campus, access to lots of free food and an uplifting worship experience.
 - i. Our target date for this event is Sunday evening, December 15.
 - d. Adopt-A-College Student (both our homegrown college students and current St. Cloud State students).

- e. Invite college worship bands to come in on a Sunday morning and lead us in worship.
- 3. Integration of college students on Sunday morning through testimonies, scripture reading, worship, welcome team, etc.
- 4. Continue to find ways to support InterVarsity (Kirsten W. and Nicole) while investing in new relationships with Campus Crusade (who office in our building).
- 5. Create a leadership team comprised of willing dream team members and others at Hope who are interested in college ministry.
- 6. Create an initial budget of \$1500 for 2020.
- 7. Status: In Process
 - a. Looking for more Hope people to join the college leadership team.
 - b. Looking to pull off a smaller scale version of “Study Day” in December in partnership with Hope Covenant, InterVarsity and Cru.

Strategic Priority # 4: Senior Ministry

Define the Priority: Develop a vibrant and sustainable ministry to seniors (60+) at Hope Covenant.

Priority Outcomes:

1. Promote discipleship opportunities for Hope Covenant seniors.
2. Develop a calendar of events and enriching activities for seniors at Hope Covenant.
3. Promote experiences at Hope Covenant that link seniors with younger generations.
4. Develop a leadership team who can build upon and sustain a ministry to seniors.
5. Communicate a ministry approach that seeks to reach children, youth, and families (our primary push) while still demonstrating a valued investment in our senior population.

Strategic Steps for 2019-2020

1. Develop an initial dream team to determine best next steps.
 - a. Team was developed and met in October 2019
2. Build a leadership team who will develop a ministry to seniors in conjunction with Lead Pastor. (Comprised of dream team folks and other interested people at Hope).
3. Build a sustainable ministry to seniors that centers around four key values:
 - a. Community: Enjoying time together.
 - b. Service: Caring for each other, the wider Hope Covenant community and beyond. (Meals ministry)
 - c. Resourcing: What are the needs of this generation and how can the church leverage resources to meet those needs?
 - d. Bridge building: Connecting the wisdom and life experience of an older generation to the broader life of the local church.
4. Build a leadership team for senior ministry.
 - a. Liaison senior ministry team with Lead Pastor and Elders.
5. Develop and send out interest surveys and promote initial events for 2019-2020.
6. Status: Invitation for a leadership team has gone out and we are scheduling the next meeting to come up with a few events we can pursue in 2020.

