

## **M3 – Vision for the Future**

### ***Multi-Site***

**Proverbs 29:18**

**Psalm 22:27-28; Revelation 7:9b**

**1. Local evangelism.**

- *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:6-11*

**2. The overwhelming proof of Scripture.**

- *Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8; Romans 10:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 3:11; Revelation 7:9; Revelation 21:24*

**3. What we will look like.**

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West Valley Church  
11/13/22  
Michael O'Neill

## **M3 - Vision for the Future: Multi-Cultural**

As many of you know, eight years ago I was involved in an automobile accident that left me with a traumatic brain injury. Part of the results of that were that there are three months of my life that I have very little memory of. Besides that, I have chronic neck pain and headaches. Another challenge is my vision. Before the accident, I sometimes wore glasses, but usually wore contact lenses. Then I began to get double vision, which was made worse by my headaches, and which made my headaches worse. Double vision can't be corrected with contacts, so now I always have to wear glasses that have a prism in them – they are thicker on the outer edges than they are on the inner edges. If I take them off, I see two of everything. For instance, if I take them off and look at \_\_\_\_\_, there are two of you and you are \_\_\_\_\_ feet apart from each other.

I thank God for corrective lenses! Having unclear and double vision makes it very difficult for me to see what I need to see and to get where I need to go!

I think you can see how that analogy applies to our life in Christ and our church. If we don't have clear vision for our lives and our church, we won't be able to move forward in the direction that God has in front of us. Proverbs 29:18 says:

“When there's no vision, the people get out of control, but whoever obeys instruction is happy.” (Proverbs 29:18, ceb)

If we don't have a vision for where we are going, we start wandering in all kinds of directions. But with a clear sense of direction and destination, we will discipline our lives to make it there. Without that clear sense of direction, we become undisciplined. It's like that old saying – “Wherever you go, there you are.” Without vision, it doesn't matter what you do with your life because you aren't going anywhere anyway.

Years ago I was on Sabbatical with my family, and we went to Germany and stayed with friends of ours who were stationed there in the Air Force. We took several trips to see the different castles and towns and historical settings. But we had no idea where we were going, and even if we had directions, we wouldn't understand them because they were in German. Do you know what an “Ausfahrt” is? You get my point! There were signs everywhere pointing to ausfahrt; I had never heard of this town, but it was in every village in the country. Ausfahrt, by the way, is German for “exit.”

We needed a map and a GPS, so we had a clear vision of where we were going, and then we disciplined ourselves to get there; we went in the correct direction and took the correct ausfahrts.

As a church we want to have a direction and purpose, and you can find your direction and purpose in your life in Christ and through your church.

So this brief series that we are doing together is called M3 – Vision for the Future. This series actually started two weeks ago with our baptism service. Baptism declares that we have a new and entirely different purpose and direction for our lives. Before, we lived for ourselves and our own direction. After putting our faith in Christ, we live for Christ and for others, and we have a profound, eternal purpose and direction for our lives.

Then last week, Dr. Tomas Alvarez shared with us the important opportunity we have to be a multi-cultural church. And at 1:30 last Sunday afternoon, we had our very first Spanish speaking worship service. You have no idea what you missed. I didn't understand all the words – I've been using an app on my phone for months now and I still don't even know enough Spanish to get myself in trouble. But I'm working hard to learn, and I won't give up. So I only understood about 3% of the words he preached but I understood 100% of the Holy Spirit, and he was powerfully present. It brought me and many of us to tears. Our plan is to eventually have regular, weekly Spanish speaking worship services. We will also have multi-cultural worship opportunities in the days ahead – worship when we praise the Lord and celebrate his love in both English and Spanish, together. In fact, our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service this year is one of those great family moments. Since Christmas Eve is on a Saturday, our service will be at 4pm and will be an hour long. We'll have Scripture readings in Spanish and English. We will also incorporate a few Latino traditions in the service. Let me tell you, Latino cultures do Christmas really well! I promise you it will be a heartwarming, inspiring worship time together.

So today and next Sunday we will continue in this series called M3. Let me explain why we call it that.

For any church, if we are going to be healthy and grow, we must understand our mission, our vision, and our strategy. I've always said that, if the church were an army, imagine that a company of army soldiers wanted to take a certain hill. Well then, that hill is their mission. The vision is what they will look like when they are on that hill. And their strategy is how they intend to take that hill. Their strategy may change depending on circumstances like the terrain or weather or enemy opposition, but their mission and vision don't change.

As a church, our mission is like that – what hill we want to take. For us, our mission is this:

**Introduce people to Jesus Christ**

**Equip people with a faith that works**

**Live as people with purpose**

**(love.learn.live)**

That's our mission: we are here to introduce people to Jesus who've never met him. Then together, we and they grow in our faith and put our faith to work in the community. And we live our lives with intentionality and purpose for the Kingdom of God. That's your mission as a Christian, and that's our mission as a church. We have a purpose that will transform our community and world not just for a season or a generation but for eternity.

That's our mission. Then, our vision is what we will look like when we've taken that hill, right?

Let me tell you this: next month I will have been your pastor for thirteen years. It was during this time – October and November in 2009 that I was praying about accepting the call to come be your pastor. As I prayed for West Valley Church and for direction from God, God revealed to me what his vision is for this church. For the last 13 years this is the direction we've been moving toward as we carry out our mission. Everything we've done has been in alignment with our mission and moving us toward our vision. So what is it that we will we look like?

Our vision used to be what we called the “four M’s.” But now we are three M’s. Let me explain:

Our vision has been that as we accomplish our mission, we would first of all become mortgage free (our first “M”). So you know that we started Here For Good in February of 2020 in order to eliminate our church’s 30-year mortgage of \$1.1 million. That’s what was still left after twenty years of paying on that mortgage! And then in addition, we need to raise funds to renovate some of the oldest and neediest parts of our great facility. We all committed to give sacrificially in significant ways above and beyond our regular tithes and offerings. But then the pandemic hit. We had to postpone the beginning of our giving until May of 2020, and even then, we couldn’t meet in person – for several months! Still you gave, and in June of 2021, just one year later, we burned our mortgage! We paid off the entire debt! Now, we are continuing to give in order to raise as much as possible to work in three areas: to update our foyer restrooms, making them ADA compliant and adding a family restroom. We want to consolidate our children’s area in order to make their space more safe and secure and more convenient for parents, and then we will use whatever we have left to do as much as we can to update our Worship Center, which desperately needs it! But we will not go into debt again.

Well, we are now mortgage free! So we don’t have four m’s anymore – we have three m’s! Here they are, not in any priority order:

We will be a **multi-generational church, a multi-site church, and a multi-cultural (or multi-ethnic) church.**

Next week we will talk about what it means to be multi-site and multi-generational, but after an amazing Sunday last week with worship services in both English and Spanish, I want to talk some more about how important it is for us in West Valley to be **multi-cultural.**

Let me just first acknowledge what some folks might say about a church being multi-cultural: some might think that it has something to do with woke philosophy, that it is the church’s acquiescence to the anti-racism liberal politics and Black Lives Matter movement of the day.

Can I be blunt? If that is your feeling about West Valley Church being multi-cultural, then you probably spend more time on social media or your favorite news outlet than you do in Scripture. If you think that our vision to be multi-cultural is driven by anything other than the heart of God revealed in the biblical mandate, then I am sad to hear that you have that little trust in God and in your church. I think by the time we’re done this morning, you will at least know what Scripture says so very clearly, and you will have to reckon with that. God’s desire from Genesis to Revelation is very, very clear: he intends for everyone to be a part of the church, his family, worshiping and serving together – NOT separately. You will see that when we are done today.

In 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11 o’clock on Sunday morning,” and, according to experts, that (statement) remains true today. About eight-in-ten American congregants still attend services at a place where a single racial or ethnic group comprises at least 80 percent of the congregation.<sup>1</sup>

That would be nothing more than an accurate observation if you didn’t contrast it with what Scripture tells us. If we take that statement and compare it to Scripture, it is no longer an observation; it becomes an indictment.

But it has always been God’s vision that all the people of the world would be united as his family. The Psalmist expressed God’s heart when he wrote:

All the ends of the earth  
will remember and turn to the Lord,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,  
for dominion belongs to the Lord  
and he rules over the nations. (Psalm 22:27-28, niv)

Notice how God describes the people of the world: “families of the nations.” People ask how you define culture, or how you define ethnicity. Politics would define it by geopolitical boundaries, sociologists might define it by cultural artifacts or indicators like food styles, familial systems, or even languages.

God describes a culture or an ethnicity as “families of nations.” In the vision of the church in Revelation 7, it says that the church is gathered around God’s throne:

“a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages...” (Revelation 7:9b, esv)

A group’s language comes close to defining an ethnicity, but its culture is deeper than that; it is the values, the ways of relating and connecting together as families and communities that define ethnicity according to the Bible. Language, food, customs, clothing, music – all those things are expressions that reinforce and celebrate a culture. That’s how the Bible defines culture or ethnicity.

Let me also respond to something else you might be thinking: isn’t that description out of Revelation 7 about the end of the world? And if so, isn’t it easier to remain segregated here, and then we will all worship together in heaven? But the Bible says some things very clearly: that God expects us to be multi-cultural now, today. Eternity is not the cause of being multi-cultural; our obedience *here* is. Would it be easier to be segregated? Yes. But there is a big difference between easy and right.

So let me explain some Biblical reasons why we need to be multi-cultural, and then explain what we expect that to look like for our church.

## 1. ***Logical evangelism.***

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.louisianaweekly.com/eleven-oclock-on-sundays-is-still-the-most-segregated-hour-in-america/>

Here's what I mean by this. One of the very clear things that the church – any church and every church – is expected to do is share the Gospel with people. Jesus gave us our great commission in Matthew 28, just before he returned to heaven. That means he was saying, “this is one of the main things I want you to do until I come back.” This is what he said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, niv)

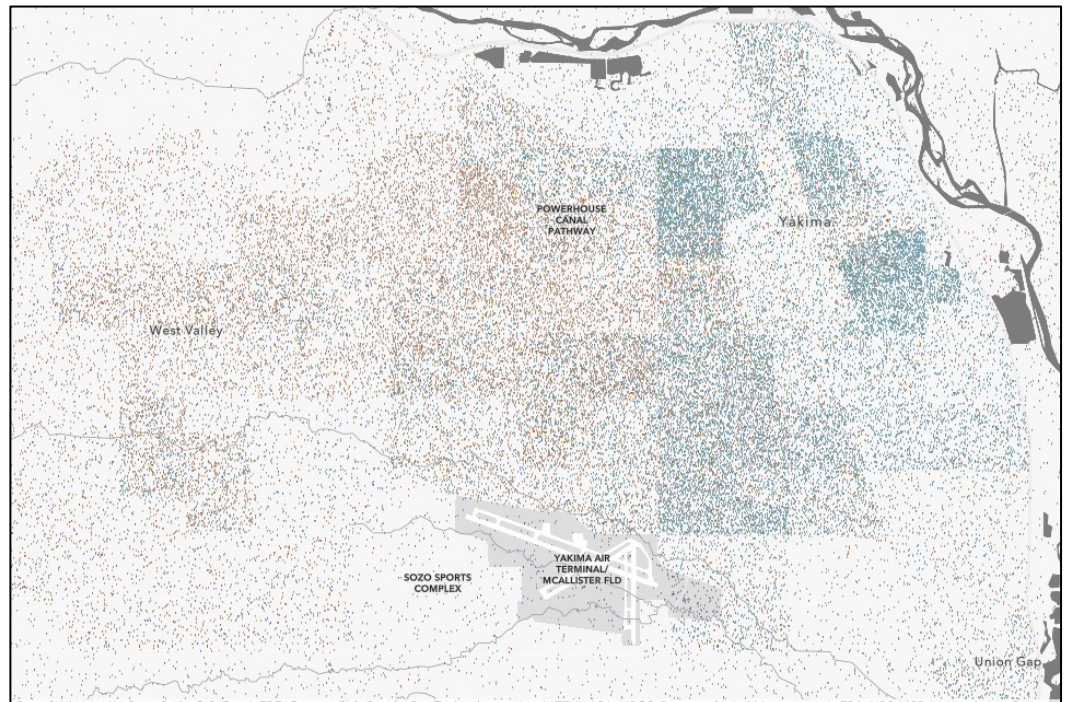
Is there anyone here who thinks the church should NOT have the priority of sharing the Gospel? That's exactly why the very first part of our mission is to “Introduce people to Jesus Christ.” That is our mission and our marching orders from Jesus.

So if we are going to do *that* in our community – here on this corner in West Valley – if we are doing that, doesn't it stand to reason that our church will begin to look like the community around us? Or do you think we should only introduce white people to Jesus? Of course not.

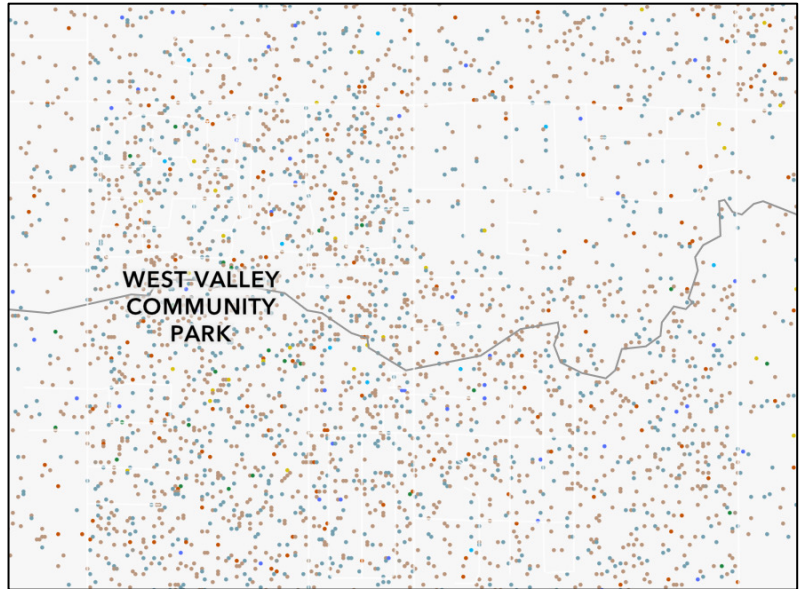
So if we are doing evangelism effectively, then it is only logical that our church will start to look like the ethnic makeup of our community.

Well then, what does our community look like? Let me show you something – this is a map of Yakima. It's called a “Racial Dot Map.” Every dot represents a dwelling – a home or an apartment – a place where people live. And each dot is a different color. In Yakima there is a majority of five colors of dots – dots that represent white or Anglo, dots that represent Latino, dots that represent mixed race, dots that represent American Indian, and dots that represent African American. There are smaller amounts of others – Asian, Pacific Islander, and others. But any guess what the top two are in the city of Yakima? Anglo and Latino, and then mixed-race households are next.

So looking at this map – I'm not sure you can see the colors well, but all of the teal color is Latino, and all the tan are white only. There are red dots and those are mixed race. Isn't it interesting how straight the dividing lines are between people? Sad.



Let's look a little closer at West Valley. You can get your bearings by that label of where West Valley Community Park is – that's over off 80<sup>th</sup> behind the schools. See that sort of bare spot just right of center? At the Southwest corner of that is the church. So the reason much of that area is sparse is because it's either bare ground or commercial property like Walmart and Rosauers. Also, this is from the 2020 census, so the apartments to our north weren't quite done yet. But look at the dots. I don't know if you can tell, but there are mainly tan dots and teal dots with some red ones peppered in. Right around our immediate neighborhood is Anglos and Latinos and some Anglo/Latino mixed. That bears out with the latest census numbers that state that West Valley is around 50% white or mixed race and around 47% Latino.



So logical evangelism states if we are going to be effective in introducing people to Jesus, our congregation will look like this map.

We all know that Acts is the story of the birth and growth of the church. It's no accident that the very first sermon was preached to multiple ethnicities. This is what it says:

...a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:6-11, niv)

God was making it very clear that the result of the church's evangelism will be people that reflect the community the church is in. That's the logic of evangelism.

All of this might make you uncomfortable, and I understand that. But that doesn't mean it's wrong. Let me make you even more uncomfortable: most sociologists agree that somewhere between 2040-2050 the majority of the US population will be non-white. That's probably not a surprise. We may get there faster depending on what the government's border policies are, but it won't come later than 2040-2050. Just by folks marrying folks of other colors, the majority of the US will be non-white. Sociologists call it "The browning of America." For folks my age and older, that may seem like it's happening fast. But for those who are under 18, this has already been true for *years* – for years our youth have been the majority non-white.

However you feel about that, there is nothing you can do about it. It is happening and it will happen. It was biologically inevitable.

I'm only giving you the facts, and the logic of evangelism. I have not made ANY statements that reflect any political agendas. If you think I did, you need to go back and rewatch this or download the manuscript and read it. I am only giving you the logic of evangelism.

But more than that, we have the...

## 2. The *overwhelming proof* of Scripture.

Let me take you on a very quick trip across the entire landscape of Scripture. Who did God identify as the person who would be the father of his people? Abraham. Here is the promise God made to Abraham:

And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:18, niv)

How many nations will be blessed by God? All the nations.

The Apostle Paul called God's promise to Abraham the "trailer for the Gospel." Like if the story of God's salvation were a movie, the trailer for the movie would be that verse. Paul said it was "the Gospel in advance." Listen to what Paul said:

"But when it saw ahead of time that God would make the Gentiles righteous on the basis of faith, scripture preached the gospel in advance to Abraham: *All the Gentiles will be blessed in you.*" (Galatians 3:8, ceb).

The very first proclamation of the Gospel is in Genesis, and it is a promise to *all* people, not just the Jews.

Then when you read the story of the church in Acts, all throughout the story it is dealing with the spread of the Gospel to all people. Over and over the New Testament addresses this. Here's a quick snapshot of some of these Scriptures:

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, (Romans 10:12, niv)

Who will he bless? ALL.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:13, niv)

Here he is addressing race and economic conditions.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28, niv)

We are all united in Christ.

For (Christ) himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself



one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-16, niv)

Has God put to death your hostility?

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. (Colossians 3:11, niv)

And then it all concludes in Revelation:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9, niv)

I could give you so many more Scriptures: the command to welcome the stranger and immigrant as a member of your family. The command to love God and love others. The Golden Rule. On and on and on. I also want you to see this picture of God's Kingdom from the end of Revelation. It is describing the city of God, with all its brilliant beauty of gems and jewels and gold and gates, and that there isn't need for sun or moon because Jesus himself is the light. And it gives us this obscure verse that most people just read right past. It says this about God's city:

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. (Revelation 21:24, ceb)

The kings of the earth will bring their glory...what do you think that means? The glory of kings is their crowns, their riches, those things that identify them as kings. And they will bring those things as gifts to Jesus. Kings represent cultures, and their glory represent those things that identify them with that culture. So imagine it like a heavenly potluck of cultures brought together to Jesus. Mexican food, Italian food, American food...all being brought together. What a wonderful description of heaven.

But last I heard, Jesus taught us to pray that God's Kingdom would come, and his will would be done, (where?) here on earth as it is in heaven.

The overwhelming proof of Scripture is that the church would be multi-cultural. It has been God's intention since he promised Abraham and all the way through to the end in the celestial city of Christ.

Do I need to say more to convince you that being a multi-cultural church is not a political agenda? It is the heart of God and always has been.

Okay, so let me conclude by painting a bit of a picture...

### **3. What we will *look like*.**

What do you think the biggest difference is between our white congregation and our Latino congregation? I mean, there are a lot, but what is the biggest one? Language. There are lots of cultural indicators that are different, right? Food, our approaches to time and planning and family and clothing and music...on and on. But language is a big one. I'm

trying to learn Spanish and it is hard! I can't imagine coming to this country and suddenly having to learn English. So it is only right that we do what we can to break down that barrier for our Spanish speaking friends and family members, but also, we don't want to take away their ability to worship as their own tribe and tongue.

So here is what we intend to do: we held our first Spanish language worship service last Sunday. We have a team of people that we've sort of informally called our "multi-cultural next steps team." We'll meet today right after church to discuss last week's service and see what lessons we need to learn from it so we can figure out how to do that again...and again...until we are doing it every week.

Noe and Sylvia Galindo (you elected Noe to the Leadership Team) have started a Spanish language small group.

As this group grows, we've committed to making available to them everything we already have available to us in our English-speaking worship and ministries. We can't be equal – we are different! But as my friend Hector Mendez says, we can be equitable.

We will be one church with at least two languages. Even though they will have Spanish worship and small groups, their children will be with our children, their teens and young adults with ours, and on a regular basis we will plan time together for both languages. We will have potlucks and meals together. We will have worship services with combined elements from English and from Spanish. We will be intentional in making sure that we are one church, united in mission and vision, even though at times we worship and meet in different languages.

Can you visualize that picture? That's our God-given vision. We discipline ourselves for it. And we are closer than ever at seeing it happen. We are now mortgage free; soon we will be multi-cultural. Not just white and Latino, but all the colors of our community.

The world doesn't believe this can happen. That's why there's so much fighting about racism in our country's landscape. What would happen if they could look at the church and see people loving each other the way God intended?

Leslie Newbigin was a renown pastor, missionary, theologian, and leader from the last century, and he once said that the church is a signpost to the kingdom of God. In other words, the world should look at the church and see us as a sign pointing toward the kind of community that is God's kingdom. Let's be that for our community. Who knows...if we can do this, maybe it will open doors for the Gospel to change our city, reducing crime, trafficking of drugs and people...a safer place for people of all cultures. I believe God can do it. I believe God wants to do it through us, and he doesn't need to wait any longer.

*Prayer*

Pastor Jason:

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6, esv)