

## **A Vision of First Christian Church**

Our Vision Team was tasked with prayerfully developing a “Vision Statement,” and a plan to implement it over the next decade or so. What does God want First Christian doing between now and 2029? Here’s what they came up with: **“OFFERING HOPE AND WELCOME TO ALL THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.”**

Proverbs 29:18 says, “Without a vision, the people perish.” I believe it. Without Winston Churchill telling all of England, “We shall never surrender,” World War II would have been lost. But often, I suspect, “perishing” isn’t so literal. Without the right vision, efforts will be misplaced, or enthusiasm will be lost. Happily, I feel the Vision Team’s statement keeps the right goal in mind, and I’m sure they gave thought to every single word.

**“Offering.”** They could have said “giving” or “extending,” but “offering” has a sacred feel. As a noun, “offerings” are what we give back to the God who gave us everything. So, with their very first word, the Team is calling us to give something to the world, but also to see it as something we give back to God.

**“Hope.”** So many things can flow from that simple word. Perhaps the greatest hope Christians can offer is that there is more to life than this life. Our eternal future is in God’s hands, ...and those are trustworthy hands!

However, a fear of death isn’t the only cause of hopelessness. The news is full of climate change, political paralysis, hate mongering, and too many people chasing too few goods. But, as an old hymn puts it: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” At last Sunday’s early service, Stephen Howell preached on Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Christians look to the future with hope not because we don’t know the challenges, but because we do know God. Of course, we **also** know God wants US to be part of the solution, so we’re called to all kinds of outreach ministries.

**“Welcome to all.”** Jesus reached with love to lepers and tax collectors, to a Samaritan woman and Nicodemus the Pharisee. God had Philip baptize an Ethiopian eunuch, and Peter did the same for a Gentile centurion. We have to remember that “all” includes people we like and people we don’t; and “welcome” is more than just letting them in: it’s embracing them, listening to them, loving them.

**“Through Jesus Christ.”** We call him “Lord,” which means, among other things, he gets to set the rules. But it also means he works through us and we draw our power from him.

It’s a good statement and a good start. The next step will be finding AND IMPLEMENTING particular ministries God wants us to engage in as a way of “offering hope and welcome to all through Jesus Christ.”

*Rev. Dave*