

An Introduction to Broadway's 2020 Visioning Process

Visioning Team Members: Belinda Davis, Darren Day, Tim Espy, Phyllis Hardin, Rick Henderson, Jack Miles, Roger Fisher, John Poehlmann, Paul Toler, Julie Wesley and Tim Carson (ex officio); Dana Fritz and Brent Ghan (co-chairs)

We were called together as a visioning team by Senior Minister, Tim Carson, and Board Chair, Carl Fisher, in August, 2012. To begin our work together, we read through past BCC visioning documents from 1989 and 2003. Through this look back in our history, it became clear that Broadway, as a church, had made substantial progress towards accomplishing goals and objectives envisioned by our congregation in the past. Through this research into our past visioning efforts, our "Seeing 2020" Team goal was formed: to help our church move forward into the next decade through gathering and organizing the hopes and dreams of our current membership.

In the beginning, we met together monthly, primarily reading and discussing two books: *Christianity for the Rest of Us* (Bass, 2007) and *Natural Church Development* (Schwarz, 1996). Bass's book showed us that churches of various sizes and missions could "break the trend" of the demise of mainstream religion while Schwarz's book laid out eight essential qualities that he had found true for more than 1000 churches across the world. He found that, no matter the size of church, these eight key qualities were in evidence: empowering leadership within the congregation, gift –based ministry opportunities, passionate spirituality, effective governance structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism and loving relationships among church members. Like staves in a bucket or barrel, Schwarz's research shows that all keys (or staves) are necessary for thriving congregations to continue to spiritually grow and develop. Tim Carson, our senior minister, completed a sermon series on these eight keys during the months of January and February, 2013.

Our group decided to use the materials available through Schwarz's research group to survey our Vision 2020 team as to our evaluation of these eight key qualities at Broadway. After seeing the results of our evaluations, we decided to survey 30 active members of our congregation regarding their opinions about how our church was performing in terms of these eight keys. As we were told to expect by Schwarz's research group, the results of both surveys were quite similar. Both groups surveyed considered empowering leadership, gift-based ministries, effective governance structures, holistic small groups and loving relationships to be strengths at Broadway. Inspiring worship services, passionate spirituality and need-oriented evangelism were ranked lower by those surveyed, but were still within the average range as compared to the international data. Even though the results of these surveys were encouraging overall, our team felt that improvement in any area is a goal worth striving for, and relaxing on positive feedback would be somehow falling short.

Using this survey information as a starting point, our Vision 2020 Team developed “world café” sessions as a way to find out more about our memberships’ hopes and dreams for Broadway’s future – with focused discussion centered around the eight keys of healthy churches. We made a trial run of our world café session with the elders of the church. We solicited input from individual members through email, conversations in the hall way and by other informal means. We held meetings with ordained and lay staff to ascertain their hopes for the future of Broadway.

In the end, we came together to create this document in the summer of 2013: an amalgamation of these many conversations about our members’ dreams about the future of Broadway based on the eight keys of healthy churches. We have collapsed these eight keys into six categories based on relevancy of the keys and their relative strengths at Broadway.

Vision 2020 Plan

During our discussions, research, readings, World Cafe sessions, and review of other congregational input, some overarching themes related to the future of Broadway Christian Church became apparent.

Communication, something many churches find challenging, was a theme that emerged. Some of the communication issues identified include providing members with more information about how they can use their spiritual gifts effectively; providing members with more information about the governance and committee structure within the church; utilizing a variety of communications vehicles and technology to reach people with information; providing new members with appropriate information and additional information as they progress in their spiritual growth and involvement; and finally communicating what a vibrant church Broadway is to the larger community in and around Columbia.

Serving as an open and welcoming church for all who may come to our door was another major theme to emerge – an area many church members felt Broadway already excels in. We discussed at some length the concept of developing a “front porch” both in terms of physical space and in terms of hospitality to both members and non-members. We believe Broadway should seriously consider embarking on a plan to make the “Front Porch” a reality. Broadway is already an open and affirming church. However, there are opportunities for us to emphasize this characteristic within an increasingly diverse congregation.

Member engagement is the third theme that emerged numerous times during our discussions. Once again this could manifest itself in many specific ways including the development and use of spiritual gifts; small group involvement and expansion; outstanding programs for youth; expansion of adult education opportunities; and the cultivation of the next generation of church leaders.

Much of what we are recommending in the 2020 Vision Plan relates to these themes. While this plan is deliberately broad in scope, it does provide a roadmap for Broadway to follow in the coming years. It is divided into vision statements for each of the quality characteristics of thriving churches based on the work of researcher Christian Schwarz. Under each vision statement are goals for Broadway to pursue in the coming years. Specific programs or activities that might be considered by future leaders should be aligned with and support these goals, but most of the specific recommendations proposed by members, ministers and staff are found in supporting documents rather than in the Vision 2020 document itself.

Finally, we thank all of those who participated in this process and offered ideas about the future of Broadway. The Vision Team took every idea seriously and many of them influenced the goals and strategies included in this plan.

Need-based Evangelism

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will share the God we love by serving in ways that help meet the immediate needs of others through deeds that support them and the Broadway Christian Church mission. Broadway Christian Church will seek ways to reach out to persons in our community and the world through existing and new ways to share God's love.

Goals

- Advocate for issues that will improve the lives of those facing challenges in their lives.
- Explore additional opportunities to spread God's love in ways that are consistent with the Broadway Spirit.
- Engage more members in activities related to mission work both locally and abroad.
- Become more involved in programs designed to assist people with the practical needs they face.
- Expand opportunities for spiritual and membership growth by becoming involved in community events
- Engage more members in activities designed to develop a strong connection with the community.
- Provide hospitality for organizations outside the church and for traveling groups.
- Expand work with refugees, the homeless, and those in poverty to help them find solutions and to find God.
- Make greater use of resources and facilities to serve children with special needs and adults in need of support.

Effective Structures

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will develop and implement a comprehensive communications program utilizing the latest affordable technology and personal connection that supports the mission of Broadway Christian Church and encourages individuals and the community of Broadway to grow in faith and services. It will ensure the existing governance structure of the church is consistent with effective communication and efficient operations.

Goals

- Ensure that members have a solid understanding of leadership and service opportunities by utilizing all available communication vehicles.
- Evaluate existing governance structures to ensure they are serving Broadway and its members as effectively as possible.
- Provide more opportunities for personal interaction among those attending the various worship services in order to create a greater sense of community.
- Develop and optimize the Broadway web site as the comprehensive source for information about the church for both members and non-members.

Holistic Small Groups and Loving Relationships

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will ensure that all members and visitors develop and nurture strong personal relationships and spiritual connections within the church.

Goals

- Ensure that small groups provide personal connections within the larger church while also serving as a connection to the larger church.
- Develop mentor program for new members.
- Establish expectation of service among new members.
- Develop youth support programs to ensure a continued connection to the church during the teen and young-adult years.
- Expand adult support programs that might include, but not be limited to divorce and widow support; singles without children; parents of young children; parents of older children; men's and women's retreats; and additional programs for the elderly.

Inspiring Worship Service

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will develop dynamic leadership opportunities related to worship, varied and inviting worship opportunities and proactive inclusion of lay people and youth in worship.

Goals

- Explore and expand worship styles that are meaningful to the diverse members of Broadway.
- Reach out to potential new members and established members in new ways through providing alternative days and times for worship.
- Utilize worship plans that appeal to all senses including art, music and dance.
- Continue and expand Elder and Deacon enrichment opportunities to engage members of the congregation.
- Improve signage that clearly invites and directs visitors and members to worship opportunities as well as other events in the church in harmonization with the “front porch” theme.
- Initiate additional opportunities for youth involvement in worship service – continuing and extending beyond Youth Sunday, praise band, youth intern.
- Investigate technological advancements for the delivery of worship, including such options as installing a telecoil loop to support persons with hearing impairment and live-streaming of worship service on the web for homebound members and for people interested in our church who live across the nation and our world.

Passionate Spirituality

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will create an environment for people to grow and deepen their spirituality and strive to fully utilize the gifts God has created within each person; help our members understand that “passionate spirituality” is self-defined and not demarcated by stereotypes.

Goals

- Communicate regularly at worship services the opportunities to connect, grow and serve.
- Explore ways to make our large church small for individuals to be able to experience it in meaningful groups, whether organized (growth groups) or unorganized (sitting room areas for informal, spontaneous conversations among members).

- Focus the scope of spiritual practices to provide depth, creating complexity in members' spiritual experience – not relying solely on a series of activities and opportunities skimming the spiritual surface.
- Empower individuals to “take an idea and run with it”. Encourage them to listen to their personal call from God and use their gifts in the way they feel called to do.

Gift-based Ministry

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will inspire members to identify their own spiritual gifts and integrate them into ministries that sync with their talents.

Goals

- Continue to assess gifts, create a registry for people's gifts and use this registry for forming committees or seeking volunteers for specific projects and programs.
- Communicate systematically and regularly how gift-based ministries help members become disciples and how their discipleship supports the church and the church's mission.
- Recognize people who find joy in making decisions for service based on spiritual gifts and using their talents in this way to support the mission of the church.

Empowering Leadership

Vision

Broadway Christian Church will equip, support, motivate and mentor individuals to become all that God wants them to be.

Goals

- Mentor new servant leaders in creative ways.
- Ask people who show a passion for a certain program or project to be a leader – going beyond those who have already proven themselves as leaders or who always “get asked”.
- Recognize all people in the church for their gifts of service – whether they are serving in a leadership role or serving behind the scenes to make programs successful.
- Grow youth leaders through alternative opportunities (co-chair position on committees, lead position in technology section of the Habitat Sale, year-long internships, scholarship for youth leaders).

Possibilities for Immediate Consideration

The following are specific issues identified by the Vision 2020 Team that merit immediate consideration by the Broadway Christian Church Board and that support the goals contained in the Vision 2020 plan. These issues are based on congregational and staff input along with the research reviewed by the Vision 2020 Team:

- Establish a preschool for special needs children. (Need-based Evangelism)
- Implement and utilize technology to enhance the worship experience of members, to reach the homebound, and to reach others outside the Columbia area. (Need-based Evangelism)
- Make facility improvements necessary to create a “front porch” that would designate a main entrance to Broadway and create a space to enhance the experience of community and belonging for members and visitors. (Effective Structures; Passionate Spirituality; Holistic Small Groups)
- Consider employment of a communications director to oversee necessary enhancements to communication as described in the Vision 2020 document. (Effective Structures)
- Consider a policy regarding the performance of same-sex union ceremonies at Broadway Christian Church. (Loving Relationships)
- Expand professional staff as needed to enable church to match increased level of ministries currently in place. (Effective Structures)
- Develop a mentor program for new members leading them into discipleship. (Empowering Leadership)
- Build a telecoil loop for the hearing impaired. (Inspiring Worship Service; Need-based Evangelism)
- Investigate effective web-based service productions. (Inspiring Worship Service)
- Establish and use a spiritual gifts registry so that committees and staff can seek members with gifts that match their needs. (Gift-based Ministry)
- Develop even stronger relationships with Rocheport Disciples and Burmese congregations. (Need-based Evangelism)