

## Launch!

[Matthew 9:35-10:1](#), [Matthew 28:16-20](#)

A pastor of a large church was about to begin service on a Sunday morning. The pews were packed – there were no empty seats anywhere. Just as the pastor approached the pulpit, a young man entered from the back of the church. He was dressed in torn jeans, a ratty tee shirt, he had tattoos peaking out from under his shirt sleeves, and he had piercings on his face. He scanned the room and saw there were no available seats, so he proceeded down the center aisle and sat on the floor directly in front of the altar. Members of the congregation murmured to themselves and sat staring at the strange young man. The pastor was about to speak when a well-dressed, elderly gentleman seated in the back stood up. He was dressed in a three-piece suit, shined shoes, a gold pocket watch draped over his vest, and

he walked with a mahogany cane topped with a gold figure. He proceeded down the aisle and with much effort and the help of those seated on the front row, he sat down on the floor next to the visitor. The church members sat in stunned silence. The pastor, upon finding his voice said, “Most of you will not remember the message spoken here today, however I am sure that none of you will forget what you just witnessed.”

Radical hospitality – that is our gift. This is what is done so well here and I believe God wants us to use that gift as a guide for the direction we head in the future. I’ve had the opportunity to meet with several folks here to help us establish a clear vision and mission for our church. There are several areas that are seen as critical at this juncture so those will become our focal points.

The first area of focus is the worship service. What I heard from several sources is that we need to enhance the worship service. The idea is to add consistency through the sermons and the order of worship, as well as enhance the musical offerings during worship. In the ‘dark period’ it was difficult to plan beyond the next week because everything was so uncertain.

Here are some certainties:

- My family and I are here for a minimum of 4 years.
- When I am not available to speak, ample notice will be given as well as assistance to find a substitute speaker.
- Greeting of friends in Christ will be a part of every service!

Music is a powerful element of worship. We are Methodists, and Methodists love to sing! We will be looking to add favorite hymns blended with some contemporary elements such as adding songs from TFWS and praise songs as we have today.

You will notice the songs from TFWS book are old gospel tunes our children have never heard. We will look at adding to the organ music through the use of guitar and piano as much as possible. We may be looking to add/resurrect a Worship Committee to help put songs together with scripture readings and sermon topics to reinforce the message. We may also look to put together some ensemble singers or a small choir. We definitely have singers here so those of you who are interested, contact me so we can start the process of putting musicians and singers together.

Worship is not for me or for you. Worship is for God. As such, worship should be a celebration. There is real joy in following God's will. We need to celebrate that as we come together to worship God. You will notice that today's bulletin lists this time as a Worship Celebration. We are here to worship

God – what an incredible gift! Let us celebrate that gift together! Even as we bring our cares and concerns to God in prayer, each of us serves as a support for others as an extended family of God – that is cause to celebrate. At times you may not feel like celebrating because of worries or cares you bring, but if you can leave your cares with God, your burden can be lifted giving you a sense of peace.

We will explore the use of other media such as audio clips to enhance our music options, and possibly the use of video clips to reinforce the sermon. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Our culture has become accustomed to sensory media and we will look at ways to introduce elements to reinforce, not detract from, the service.

The second area is to enhance our focus on children, youth and young families. We are looking to teach praise songs to our

young people to share during worship. We are bringing back some fun activities such as a Halloween Party, Game Night, group trips (mystery trips) and today's picnic. What I heard is that things have been so stressful lately, with issues with the property, and difficulties finding speakers from 1 week to the next, there was no time for fun. But Christians need fellowship. Our children need to see that it is okay to have fun with church folks. It is also an excellent way to connect with the community. We need to provide a safe haven for our kids, even if it means doing something silly like dressing up for Halloween. Some may say, 'I don't have kids – that's not for me.' We are planning activities that are appropriate for all ages, so we encourage everyone to come and have some fun! Enjoy some Christian fellowship which we all need, and you can invite your friends and family to join us. We will be looking at specific

activities for children and youth – maybe a lock in or bowling trip. Stay tuned for more details!

Finally, we are looking at enhancing our communication with each other and with our community. Some of you may have noticed some enhancements to our website. We have added an online shopping tool that will serve as a no cost fundraiser for the church. We have added the feature of posting sermons on the site to help those that are computer savvy but unable to get to services. The website alone can serve as an outreach ministry – those who may never set foot in our church can still access the word of God through the internet. We are looking to add a regular newsletter, again enhancing what we already have. This will help to keep everyone up-to-date on current happenings, birthdays, anniversaries, and special events. We will also develop a small packet for visitors so they know

how to contact the pastor, and it will include a brochure about our church and its ministries. We will look to have a more active presence at community events, and make contact with the local paper to post upcoming events on their community page. Lastly, we will look at signage to better ‘advertise’ special services and events to entice interest from the community. Etchison needs to know that Mount Tabor is alive and kicking. We are movin’ and shakin’ as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ with our community at every opportunity.

In summary,

**Our vision:** To help members of our community find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Our Mission:** As Christ’s followers in this world, we will serve God through:

- Celebrating God’s gifts by enhancing our worship service.
- Reaching out to our children and young people by providing safe and fun activities for families, enhancing

our Sunday School, and incorporating children and youth in music programs for worship.

- Establishing good communication with our community through the use of our website, brochures, newsletters, presence at community events, and increased use of signage for special events.

May God continue to bless us and guide us as we embark on this journey to help our neighbors find a *personal* relationship with Jesus Christ.

**IT'S TIME TO LAUNCH!**