

THE VISION OF CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

A Spirit Filled, Multicultural Church, Taking Jesus to Home, Family and the World...

1. The importance of vision

A. Introduction

1. The Bible says that without a vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29.18, KJV). But God has a clear vision for his people as revealed in the Bible - and it is awesome! Humans were created by God to participate in his plan to establish his kingdom and image in all the peoples of the earth. Jesus himself said that when that happens, the end will come (Matthew 24.14). This purpose is to be accomplished by Christ's mystical body on earth called "the church." Those who are part of the church have been commissioned by Christ himself to finish the work the Father called him to do. What is this great work? Jesus said he would build the church to full maturity in every ethnic people on earth (Matthew 16.18; Ephesians 4.11-13; Revelation 7.9).
2. The work of conforming God's worldwide people into his image was marred by sin as recorded in Genesis 3, but God promised to raise up a male child who would "crush the serpent's head" (3.15). This child was God's only Son, Jesus, who paid the penalty for the sins of mankind on the cross to reconcile men to God. Those who personally receive God's provision for sin at the cross have their sins completely forgiven and are restored in their relationship with Him.
3. The very presence of Christ is given to those who receive him as the only way to God. His presence is the Holy Spirit who lives in each believer. The purposes of Christ through his church are accomplished through the present-day ministry of the Spirit whom Jesus poured out on his people on the day of Pentecost to make himself available to them in every place and at any time. The Spirit not only indwells each believer but also gives gifts from Christ to each one to define our individual roles in the larger purposes of God. As we honor the Spirit of God, we honor Christ who honors God. In this way the kingdom of God advances.
4. The ultimate end of all of this is the manifest glory of God - the supreme expression of his goodness in Christ. The worldwide mission of the church will not fail. It was the apostle Paul who told the church in Ephesus, "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* (3.20-21).

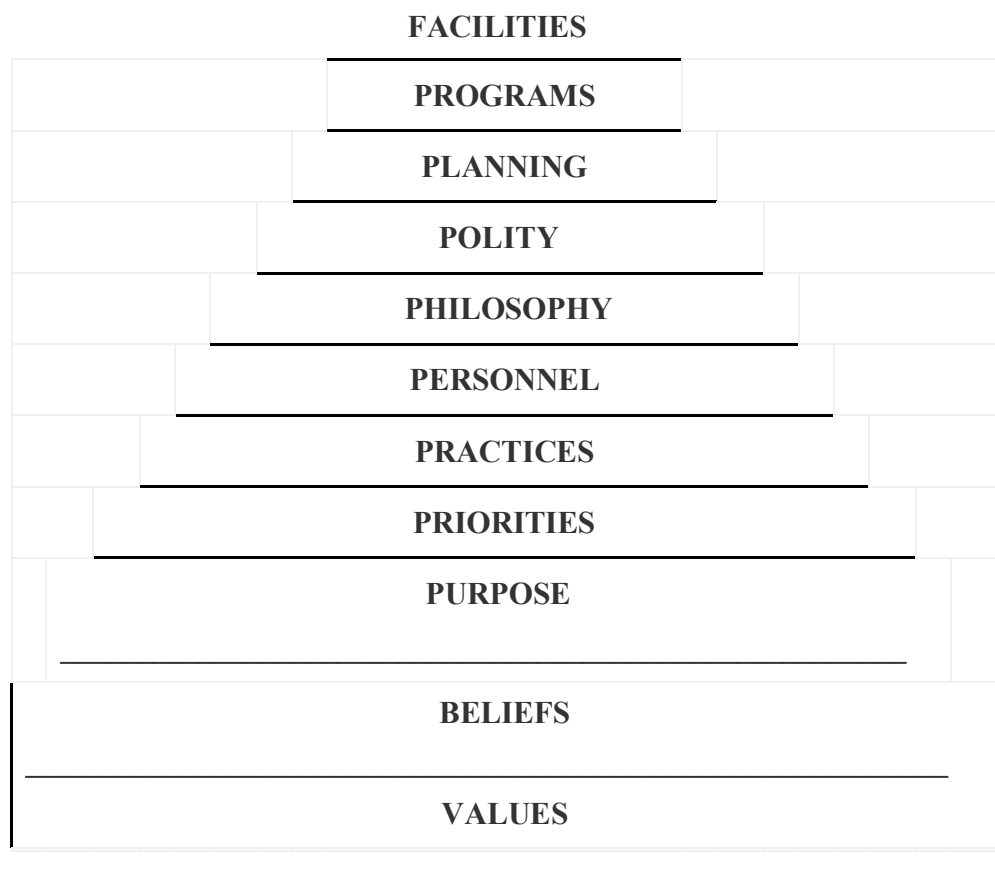
5. What would you do with your gifts and talents if you knew you could not fail?
We believe God has given us a vision to establish Church of the Living God to speed the coming of the Lord.

B. So what is vision anyway?

1. What vision is not
 - a. Vision is not a dream. A dream precedes a vision and is much broader; it is the “soup” out of which visions come. In a very real sense a vision is a dream taken seriously and taken to the next stage. Ever since I gave my life to Christ I have dreamed about how to lead the body of Christ to fulfill her mission. But the dream itself awaited God’s specific prompting to become a vision.
 - b. A vision is not an objective or a goal. Objectives and goals are cold and concrete - a vision is warm and excites the heart. People can buy into a vision but have no affinity to someone’s goal. Just as a dream precedes a vision, so a vision precedes objectives and goals.
 - c. A vision is not a purpose. Purpose statements answer the question, “Why?” Vision answers the question, “What?”
2. What a vision is
 - a. A vision is a clear mental picture of a preferable future given by God.
 - b. The vision is given to the church planter or pastor through serious study of the Bible and through prayer. The pastor then casts that vision into others. Those whom God is calling alongside the pastor are enabled by God to see the vision as a reality by faith, thus coming into alignment with what God is planning to do. The pastor needs be committed to stick to the vision lest the agendas of others throw the team off-track. Through continually casting the vision, the team can have a window into what God wants to accomplish through them in the years to come.
 - c. Those who are on the same page with the pastor will partner with him to fulfill the vision under the ongoing direction of the Holy Spirit. God will eventually raise up a gifted eldership to lead and care for the flock.

2. Building a vision for a local church

A. Jesus said that he would build his church. How does he build it? In the same way that there is a process in building a building (you have to lay the foundation before you frame the walls!), so also there is a clear process in building a church.



B. Each of these elements flow naturally into the next. Just as the foundation of a building, which is invisible, supports the superstructure, so do the unseen yet controlling elements of a church i.e., values, purpose etc. All that is seen, like our programs and personnel, are supported by and exemplify that foundation.

Churches are literally built from the bottom up by the parameters of the Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

C. The next section will address the specific vision for the kind of church we are attempting to build in an attempt to explain who we are and where we pray God will take us.

3. Church Of The Living God: *who We are and where We're going*

A. Beliefs

1. All our behavior flows out of what we believe. The beliefs we carry into a church plant are composed of a number of things:
 - a. Assumptions we make about life, God, and truth i.e., we believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God.
 - b. What we believe about who we are, the call of God on our lives, what we are to do, who we are to reach, etc.
2. We need to articulate these assumptions on paper as best as possible. These are fixed givens and are not negotiable.
3. Our beliefs are formed and shaped out of our conviction that the 66 books that comprise the Protestant Canon of the Bible are the inspired, infallible Word of God and define Truth for all men and women everywhere.
4. The meaning of biblical texts are ascertained by discerning the author's original intent through prayerful study of ancient culture and language and attention to literary context.
5. For our core theology, see the *Church of the Living God Statement of Faith...*
We believe... The Bible to be the only inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God. (John 16:13; II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:21; I Thessalonians 2:13)

That there is one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; John 14:16)

In the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, (John 1:1, 14; 20:28-29; Philippians 2:6-11; Isaiah 9:6; Colossians 2:9) His virgin birth, (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:34-35; Isaiah 7:14)

His sinless life, (II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26-27; I John 3:5; I Peter 2:22)

His miracles, (Matthew 4:23; Luke 6:17-19; John 3:2)

His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, (Colossians 1:14, 20; Romans 5:8-9; Ephesians 1:7)

His bodily resurrection, (I Corinthians 15:3-4; Luke 24:4-7, 36-48; Revelation 1:17-18)

His ascension to the right hand of the Father, (Acts 2:33; 5:30-31; I Peter 3:22)

And In His personal return in power and glory. (Acts 1:11; Philippians 2:9-11; I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; John 14:1-3)

That justification by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful man. (Rom. 3:24-25; John 3:3-7; I John 5:11-13; Eph. 2:1-16; Rev. 5:9; Acts 4:12; I Cor. 6:11)

The prime agency for the work of God's Kingdom is the Christian local church functioning under the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ. To the church have been entrusted the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (Acts 2:41-47; 16:4-5; Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:22-23; I Cor. 12; 11:23-26)

In the present ministry of the Holy Spirit which includes: His indwelling and empowering, by which the Christian is enabled to live a godly life; His supernatural gifting, infilling, and enabling of the Church for its work, life and worship. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit which is evidenced by speaking in Tongues. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4; 10:44-46; I Cor. 12; 14)

B. Values

1. Values are those things we think are important in light of what we believe. They are our strategies to get our legitimate needs met.
 - a. God created every human being with legitimate needs. He did so, presumably so he could meet those needs as our Creator. We are completely dependent on him for everything.
 - b. The Bible never develops a theology of human need. It doesn't teach on what Man needs but rather on what God provides. To understand our needs we need to work backwards from the provision to the need. If God provides bread then we must have a need to eat. If God provides love and purpose then we must have those needs.
 - c. Indeed, the Old Testament name for God is *YHWH*, a set of consonants only. The ancient Hebrews felt the name of God was so holy that it should not be spoken. Consequently, when it was written it was preserved only as consonants. When the vowels of the word for lord, *adonai*, are placed on the four consonants, it is usually spelled and pronounced *yahweh*. This was God's special name used only with his people, Israel. It was probably derived from the Hebrew verb "to be" (*hayah*) and means something like "I will be what you need me to be." His

very name means that he, as the Creator, will meet the needs of the dependent ones he has created.

d. It has been well said that our two greatest needs are for SECURITY and SIGNIFICANCE. Both of these needs are met only in relationship to God. Only as we trust him and him alone will we experience the love and fulfillment we have always desired. Only in him is there fullness of joy.

2. Values, then, are those actions we think will meet our deepest needs in light of what we believe to be true. To find out what we truly believe we must again start with our behaviors and work backwards.

3. In regard to the church, our values are formed from what we believe the Bible teaches, our identity, our culture and our sense of mission. Listed below are things that we value in light of what we believe and are lumped together in three basic categories.

4. **Theological values**

- a. Jesus Christ as God incarnate
- b. The power of the cross to cancel sin and destroy the power of the devil
- c. Being born again
- d. Intimacy with God and others
- e. Obeying God by faith
- f. The Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God
- g. Interpreting the Bible in its historical/cultural context
- h. The Apostle's Creed
- i. Baptism and the Lord's supper
- j. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility
- k. Doing only what the Father is doing
- l. The kingdom of God as the central Biblical concept
- m. Jesus as our model for life and ministry
- n. Advancing the kingdom and making disciples by speaking the words and doing the works of Jesus
- o. Discipling all ethnic peoples
- p. One baptism in the Holy Spirit - many fillings
- q. The present day ministry of the Spirit through fruit and gifts
- r. Government through a plurality of elders who acknowledge the gift of leadership on the pastor

5. **Ministry values**

- a. Doing the Bible as well as seriously studying it
- b. Ministering out of relationship with God
- c. Intercessory prayer
- d. Loving and extending mercy to people (grace based ministry)
- e. Human worth and dignity
- f. Healing the whole person
- g. Giving and stewardship of time, energy and resources
- h. Evangelizing all cultures
- i. Discipling by modeling
- j. Ministry to the poor and broken

- k. Ministry to children, single adults and families
 - l. Affirming and blessing all Christian churches
 - m. The elder's role to equip the church for the work of ministry, especially the leaders
 - n. Equality of men, women, and children in kingdom ministry
 - o. Relational oversight of the local church through accountability through relationships with other pastors
6. **Style values**
- a. Worship both modern as well as traditional
 - b. Instruments that reflect the current generation
 - c. Genuine emotional freedom as the Lord leads
 - d. Listening to the Lord (gifts, timing, appropriateness)
 - e. Ministering one to another through the gifts of the Spirit
 - f. Praying and planning in biblical balance
 - g. Natural as well as supernatural learning
 - h. Accepting people for who they are and where they are
 - i. Honesty and integrity
 - j. Being real, not phony or religious
 - k. Being natural, not manipulative or hyped
 - l. Simplicity
 - m. Excellence
 - n. Organism before organization, people before things
 - o. Functional, cost effective facilities

C. Purpose

1. The purpose of any organization grows out of its values and is the reason for its existence. Our purpose is our anchor, our common focus. Every activity, program, practice, etc. must support our purpose or we will be wasting our efforts.
2. A statement of purpose needs to take into account what we think the Bible teaches about:
 - a. The *general mission of the church*: This is our understanding of what we think the mission of the church of Jesus Christ is on the earth. Those of us in Church of the Living God see the extension of the kingdom of God as the essence of the Churches' mission. Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God ... for this is why I was sent" (Luke 4.43). Building off the foundation of the kingdom, Jesus gave us two Great Commandments (love God and neighbor, Matthew 22.37-39) and the Great Commission (baptize and teach obedience in all nations, Matthew 28.28-30). Growing out of these commands, I think we could package the kingdom purpose of the Church in five ways, all of them God-ward ministries that we give to Him for His sake and joy. Out of all the things we value, these five commands of Jesus are the most important of all. We could call them the FIVE FOUNDATIONAL VALUES OF THE CHURCH.
 - (1) Great Commandments
 - **Ministry to God**
 - **Ministry to the people of God**

(2) Great Commission

- **Ministry to the future people of God**
- **Ministry training**
- **Ministry sending**

b. The *specific ministry of our church*: This is a statement that could only be made by our church and denotes the specific way in which the general mission of the church is to be fulfilled in the calling of the planter and then, later, of the future elders. This needs to include the specific geographic focus, the demographic target audience, the philosophy of ministry that will be adopted, etc. (more below).

c. In light of our assumptions about the general mission of the church and those specific things God has called our church to be and to do, we need to commit to paper a statement of purpose. This paragraph can eventually be honed down to a mission statement.

3. Building our mission statement

a. A mission statement is a concisely worded paragraph, then sentence, that defines the purpose of a person's or organization's existence.

(1) Who? Our ministry focus group is comprised of boomers, busters and X-ers who would like to know and serve God in a balanced mix of both tradition and contemporary, formal and casual, and natural way, and who live primarily in Perris and surrounding cities. The people we are after have generally been affected by various cultures and forms.

(2) The people the Church of the Living God wants to reach are simply hurting people.

(3) How?

(a) We want to accomplish this vision by multiplying small groups focused on personal needs and planting churches in every local community.

(b) Our long-term vision is to plant churches among peoples and tribes that have never heard of Jesus.

(c) In order to do the above we will need to establish a school (Church of the Living God Biblical Institute and School of Ministry) for training pastors, worship leaders, children's ministers, and church planters.

4. **The mission of the Church of the Living God**

God has Church of the Living God into being for the purpose of gathering unchurched people to help them become authentic followers of Jesus Christ.

Our prayer is that Jesus would form us into a worshipping community of born-again Christians, reconciled to God through the death of Jesus Christ and made into his very image by the Holy Spirit.

As a missional community our primary goal is to glorify God through our love as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our love finds expression in the way we worship, honor relationships as family, win the lost, care for the poor, heal the broken, reproduce the image of Christ in others, and planting like-minded churches throughout the world. We invest ourselves, toward that day when people from among every tribe, people, tongue and nation will give praise to God at his throne.

As we go we want to pursue excellence in a way that is naturally supernatural, casual, culturally relevant and full of joy!

5. When this paragraph is honed down to its essential mission it would read:
A SPIRIT FILLED MULTICULTURAL CHURCH GATHERING UNCHURCHED PEOPLE TO HELP THEM BECOME AUTHENTIC FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

- a. GATHERING: From the opening moment of his public ministry to his death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus gathered people to himself. God has always intended to grow a large family that bears his image. This means continually gathering those that God has called out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2.9).
- b. UNCHURCHED PEOPLE: This defines who we are to gather. Jesus told a parable about the priority of leaving the sheep already in the pen and searching for the lost sheep (Matthew 18.10-14). The church that isn't gathering lost sheep has missed the central essence for her existence. While we will get our share of Christians transferring from other churches, our primary focus is to gather those who are not involved in any local church. These people have either no relationship with Christ or have left the church out of hurt or boredom.
- c. HELP THEM: Our gathering is not passive, nor is it unintentional. We gather to help, to come alongside. We are not standing above but parallel to. We are those who have come out of darkness into his marvelous light and are simply helping others find who we have found.
- d. BECOME AUTHENTIC FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST: Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and make more disciples. Disciples were those who wanted to be just like the master. Jesus' disciples were eventually called "Christians" which means "little Christs." We have chosen to use the term "authentic Christians" to describe true disciples of Jesus. There are a lot of people asserting to be Christians these days. We want to differentiate real, authentic Christians from those who pledge one thing on Sunday and then live an entirely different life during the week. A fully authentic follower of Jesus is one who is pressing on into full maturity in Christ. The Bible says that becoming conformed to the very image of Christ is the destiny of every human being (Romans 8.29). The apostle Paul said that we labor with people to present them one day to God *mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ* (Ephesians 4.13).

D. Priorities

1. Out of our values grow not only our purpose but our priorities. Our priorities govern what we do with our time, energy, and resources in support of our purpose. In light of the myriad of “urgent” things that we could do, what we think is *most* important will help us to make the choices that will help us keep on track with what God has called us to do. Our priorities serve as red and green lights for us.
2. Growing out of our five foundational values, we find the following biblical priorities:

Ministry to God

- Worship
- Prayer
- Knowing and obeying the Bible, the Word of God
- Obedience to the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit
- Giving
- Commitment to a local church

Ministry to the People of God

- Commitment to healthy families and single adults
- Mature fellowship with other Christians

Ministry to the Future People of God

- Winning the lost
- Caring for the poor
- Healing the sick

Ministry Training

- Reproducing the character of Christ in others
- Reproducing the deeds of Christ in others
- Advanced Bible knowledge
- Leadership training

Ministry Reproduction

- Church planting
- World missions
- Church renewal/revival

E. Practices

1. These describe the skills, attitudes, and activities through which we flesh out our priorities. Developing the practices of discipleship in people’s lives is the basic training objective of the church.
2. The following are the biblical practices we want to instill that flow out of our priorities:

Ministry to God

Worship

- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- Adoration
- Celebration

Prayer

- Praise
- Petition
- Intercession
- Tongues
- Faith (for healing, miracles)
- Fasting
- Hearing from God

Bible

- General knowledge
- Interpretation
- Application
- Meditation

Holy Spirit

- Being continually filled with the Spirit
- Having the “fruit” of the Spirit
- Responding to the “gifts” of the Spirit

Giving

- Time
- Energy
- Resources

Church

- Sacraments (Baptism and Lord’s Supper)
- Celebration services
- Small groups

Ministry to the People of God

Family and Singles

- Marriage preparation
- Communion in marriage
- Raising children
- Healthy single living
- Financial planning
- Life management

Fellowship

- Communication
- Relationships (building and repair)
- Serving with ministry gifts
- Healing (see below)

Ministry to the Future People of God

Evangelism

- Articulating the gospel
- Leading someone to Christ
- Giving a defense for the faith
- Follow-up a new believer

Poor

- Compassion
- Mercy (feeding, clothing, caring for)
- Educating

Healing

- Biblical healing model
- Exercising spiritual gifts
- Laying on of hands

Ministry Training

Character of Christ

- Learning how to confront in love
- Learning how to disciple others

Deeds of Christ

- Doing the “discipleship loop” with others (I do it, I do it while others watch, they do it while I watch, I leave them doing it)
- Bible knowledge
- Seeks theological training

Leadership training

- IRTDMFR (can Identify, Recruit, Train, Deploy, Monitor, Feed, and Reproduce other workers and leaders)
- Seeks advanced leadership training

Ministry Reproduction

Church Planting

- Going
- Sending

Missions

- Going
- Sending

Church Renewal

- Blessing the whole Church
- Corporate repentance
- Giving and receiving spiritual gifts

3. The 3 Cs

a. Having said all this, we have chosen to simplify our foundational values for the purpose of communication. At the Church of the Living God we define authentic Christians as those who use their time, energy and resources to commit themselves to:

- (1) Christ
- (2) The Church of Christ
- (3) The Cause of Christ

b. The chart below shows how the 3 Cs simplify the five foundational values.

Ministry to God	Commitment to Christ
Ministry to the People of God	Commitment to the Church of Christ
Ministry to the Future People of God	Commitment to the Cause of Christ
Ministry Training	Commitment to the Cause of Christ
Ministry Sending	Commitment to the Cause of Christ

4. Those who care committed to Christ, the Church of Christ and the Cause of Christ will historically be characterized by the following seven practices based on their beliefs and values:

- a. Because they are committed to Christ, they will:
 - (1) Develop a secret devotional life with God, thus cultivating an intimate relationship with Him.
 - (2) Live a life of holiness as characterized by taking on, over time, the lifestyle of Christ.
- b. Because they are committed to the Church of Christ, they will:
 - (1) Meet regularly with God’s people in one primary local church for corporate celebration
 - (2) Develop intimate community relationships with fellow church members through regular small group participation.
 - (3) Give generously to the work of God through the local church (the Bible teaches at least a “tithes” or tenth belongs to the Lord; gifts over and above are considered “free will offerings”).
 - (4) Serve the Lord through the exercise of one’s spiritual gifts and natural talents in some kind of ministry.
- c. Because they are committed to the cause of Christ, they will:
 - (1) Tell their friends about the good news of Jesus and invite them to check it out.

F. Personnel

1. This describes the people who exemplify our practices and model them in our programs. These are the disciples that all of the above is designed to produce. *They are Children of the Living God.*
2. We need to have written job descriptions for each of the key roles in the church so our personnel know exactly what is expected of them and they can be monitored for growth.
3. Our philosophy of leadership is that leaders need to be unified in values, priorities, and practices and be in alignment with the overall vision. They must be loyal to the senior pastor and elders and be willing to be a team player. We don’t staff to fill empty leadership roles. We want to honor what the Spirit of God is doing by waiting on him for His choice of leaders. Our job is to pray for laborers and recognize whom God is raising up out of the life of the church.

G. Philosophy

1. Our philosophy of ministry involves our understanding of how Jesus ministered, our strategy of how our system is going to work, and our style. All three of these

grow out of our values and purpose and describe how we live out our priorities. It provides the overall focus for the church. *All church members must know our churches' philosophy of ministry so they can partner with it.*

2. Our primary ministry principle

a. Central to our ministry is Jesus' statement in John 5.19 where he describes his philosophy of ministry: "I only do what I see the Father doing." Jesus' style of ministering revolved around his intimate relationship with God out of which he could sense what the Father was doing in any given situation. Out of deference to the Father, Jesus obeyed.

b. For us as Christians, with our sinful lives, we don't always know what the Father is saying. But emulating Jesus means following him in intimacy, holiness, listening, and obeying by faith (faith is spelled R-I-S-K).

c. Two things must be affirmed at the same time, praying and planning. Both of these are part of a biblical philosophy of ministry. Jesus honored both proverbs: "Commit your works to the Lord that your plans might be established" and "The mind of man plans much but it is the Lord who determines his steps" (Proverbs 16.3, 9). This puts us in a place of tension. We prayerfully plan our programs and commit them to the Lord that he might cause them to succeed while, at the same time, being open to God's agenda through the Holy Spirit.

3. The philosophy of our programs

a. Our program philosophy centers around three Ws.

(1) WORSHIP: When we get together at Church of the Living God we want to worship the Lord in "spirit and truth" i.e., out of a congruity of the inner and outer man. The Lord wants our whole beings, not religious ritual. When the inner and outer man are in alignment, God is glorified and this is the highest priority of His church.

(2) WORD: When we get together at the Church of the Living God we want to honor the teaching of the written Word of God. We honor the Lord by increasing knowledge of the Bible so we can have an increasing obedience of the Bible. Bible *study* leads to Bible *do*.

(3) WORKS: Bible *do* means responding to the Bible and to the voice of the Holy Spirit who shows and empowers us to advance the kingdom of God . Every Christian needs to know how to minister just like Jesus did.

b. Our philosophy of ministry also determines how our programs work together. It determines which program does what. There are numbers of decisions that need to be made in regard to how a church will fulfill its understanding of its mission. We need to ask questions like:

(1) Will our Sunday morning service target believers or unbelievers?

(2) What will our approach be to spiritual gifts? What programs will feature them?

(3) How will we grow? By converting totally unchurched people? By transfer growth?

(4) How will the preacher approach the sermon - with a passage from the Bible or a biblical topic?

c. In answer to the questions above, we want to build our philosophy of ministry around the following strategy. This strategy centers around our mission statement: a Spirit filled multicultural church gathering unchurched people to help them become authentic followers of Jesus Christ. Our strategy assumes that we who are members are, ourselves, fully engaged in the process described below and pressing on to maturity in Christ so we can take others along with us. We are asking each COLG member to:

- (1) Build a real relationship with an unbeliever for the purpose of leading them to Christ.
- (2) Share verbal witness with that unchurched friend
- (3) Bring the seeker to an group designed especially for them.
- (4) Or bring them to a Sunday morning service that is:

(a) The church in action - full-on worship, teaching straight from the Bible, prayer available for salvation and personal needs (i.e., Worship, Word, Works). The premise here is that the true church, in unity and power, is the most evangelistic thing going. Lost people have always dreamed about the genuine article, they just have never seen it.

(b) Sensitive to the seekers that are there, not assuming that they have a clue who or what a senior pastor is or that Ezekiel is a book in the Bible, let alone how to find it.

Note: this tension between focusing on the needs of the church with an eye to the visitors in our midst is dynamic. That is to say that there is no formula here. The key operative is “doing what the Father is doing.”

(5) Pray with that friend to receive Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

(6) Take that friend with you regularly to attend a service and/or seminars designed for ministry training. These meetings will be characterized by longer worship and body ministry through the Holy Spirit.

(7) Help that friend join a small group for personal growth, relationship, and pastoral care.

(8) Help them discover, develop, and deploy their spiritual gift(s).

(9) Help them steward their resources in a God honoring way.

4. In addressing all of the above issues, our philosophy of ministry interacts with our “style” of ministry.

a. Our style grows out of the combination of who we are and how we have decided to do business (our philosophy).

b. In the Church of the Living God, our style flows out of some key values we hold such as:

(1) Being natural and not hyped

(2) Trying to stay on the edge of culture

(3) Being objective

(4) Not being afraid of emotions when God is touching them

(5) Walking it the tension between being casual and pursuing excellence

(6) Being open to the Holy Spirit’s ministry in a meeting while being sensitive to the seekers in our midst

H. Polity

1. For every organism there must be organization to support it. That organization exists for the organism and not vice versa. Our polity is the governmental structure whereby we make the plans that will enable us to implement our purpose, philosophy and practices, and peacefully shepherd Jesus' growing flock.
2. Church of the Living God polity values the need for a primary vision caster (the senior pastor), a plural eldership, and sensitivity to the congregation's needs without giving the congregation the voting power to set or remove elders.
3. While we affirm local church autonomy, we see that autonomy within the context of relationship with pastors and Churches like-minded.
4. Our understanding of polity, then, would include:
 - a. A senior pastor to lead the church as the primary vision-caster
 - b. A plurality of elders working in conjunction with the senior pastor
 - c. A layer of lay elders who oversee groups of small groups
 - d. An pastor's advisory council (PAC)
 - e. Ministry directors over task ministries
 - f. Oversight from the R.T.V. president
5. It will take time to set all of these layers in place. Initially the church planter sets the genetic code and direction and looks for mature leaders who are on the same page with him and whom God is raising up. He lays hands on them according to God's time and begins to share ministry with them.

I. Planning

1. This describes our vision from the Holy Spirit. It combines our purpose, priorities, and philosophy with specific direction from the Holy Spirit regarding our future course. Building off the foundation of who we are and where we think God is calling us to go, plans are prayerful attempts to articulate how we're going to get there in light of our current needs.
2. The following is how we approach the planning process:
 - a. Overall strategy: 6 months to 5 years
 - b. Needs assessment: where are we now in light of our overall strategy?
 - c. Needs prioritized: what's important now in light of our overall strategy?
 - d. Objectives: annual or bi-annual; broad, basically qualitative long range targets in light of where we are now and where we believe God wants us to be
 - e. Action steps: how we will get there step by step. Working backwards from each objective, write a reasonable "faith outline" of how we will get there via a combination of programs and activities. These action steps become our measurable goals.
 - f. Goals: faith statements of how we will achieve our objectives. They must be specific, attainable, and measurable.
 - g. Programs: what, when, where, why?
 - h. Personnel: who (worker/leader list with paired jobs - identify possible recruits) along with job description (values, vision, etc., beginning and ending, what the job entails, expectations of performance)
 - i. Practices: what skills will be featured in the activity generated by our goals?

- j. Action list: all the things needing to be done to accomplish our goals and objectives
- k. Weekly planning: action list and prioritize into weekly action list
- l. Daily planning: weekly action list and prioritize into daily tasks

J. Programs

1. These are the vehicles through which our plans come into reality. Programs are simply a means of getting us where we want to go and are like the jets on a plane. They answer the questions, “What, when, where, and how?” and generally consist of some combination of our priorities, practices and personnel. All of these are combined into one specific time frame that is called a program. Programs may overlap but ultimately each is designed to fulfill a specific need as its primary purpose. *Programs will come and go as our needs change*. The old adage is true: the seven last words of the church are, “We’ve never done it that way before!”
2. Each program should be designed to feature one or more of our priorities, model our practices, and be led by someone who is exemplifying those practices.

K. Phacilities: Hey, I had to stay with the letter “P!” All of the above needs to happen somewhere. Phacilities begins with a home or School, then a Church, and ends with, Lord willing, the remodeling or construction of our own building or complex.

4. Church Of The Living God strategy: *How we plan to get there*

A. Going back to Proverbs 16.3, we prayerfully craft a plan and offer it to the Lord for his blessing. Along the way he can “guide and direct our paths” i.e., tweak the plan any way he wants (Proverbs 16.9).

B. The big picture

1. God’s plan for the world as seen in the book of Acts in the New Testament centered initially on one people (the Jews) and one city (Jerusalem). It was only after establishing a “mother church” in Jerusalem that the good news of Jesus began to travel to surrounding regions, first to the Jews in the hills of Judea, then to the Samaritan people to the north, and finally to the Gentile populations of the world with a new mother church being established as a base in Syrian Antioch, the doorway to Asia and Europe.
2. Using this same strategy, we believe God wants to establish a Jerusalem in Perris with outreaches to Judea and Samaria in Riverside, San Bernardino, and surrounding communities. The goal would be to establish a solid church ministering effectively as a model to one community. This will give us a geographic focus for the purpose of evangelism.
3. As people began to drive the short distance to Nuevo, Riverside etc., small groups can begin to be established in these areas as well. Eventually, those groups will grow through social networks and begin to do their own outreaches into their own communities. These small group clusters will then begin to cultivate a vision in prayer for a church in their own area and ask God to raise up a pastor.

4. While we are growing the resources in the Perris mother church and establishing satellite churches in surrounding communities, we also want to begin crossing cultures with the gospel.

a. At first this will mean touching some community of the poor under the direction of God. This could mean establishing a pantry for food and clothes, teaching people to read, helping people get jobs, caring for the homeless along the communities, etc.

b. We also want to begin planting churches among the various ethnic populations in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, such as Filipino, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Mexican, and African American.

c. We will also want to work cross culturally in other countries of the world under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

5. To do all this we will need to start a training center for training pastors and missionaries in Bible, pastoral ministry, church planting, and church growth.

C. How did we get our name?

We have kept the name “Church of the Living God” which is biblical and referenced in:

^{KJV} **1 Timothy 3:15** But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Since believers were first called Christians in Antioch about 2,000 years ago, the church of the living God has simply always existed. Throughout history depraved and ungodly men and women have tried without success to eradicate it from the face of the earth. But God’s church will stand strong and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This powerful church still exists today in a balanced but radical form, as 21st century disciples of Jesus Christ, full of the Holy Spirit, and committed to His work of service are alive and well. The church is multicultural and represented by men, women and children from throughout the world. Yet the church is not merely a building or a place to gather and fellowship but rather, it is the “people” or true followers of Jesus Christ. So while many churches have chosen a variety of names to represent themselves and forge an identity for what they may believe, the Church of the Living God – Perris, California has chosen to embrace the original phrase or name referencing the New Testament church of Jesus Christ as a commitment to, as the scripture states, continue a legacy of being “the pillar and ground for the truth”.

D. How did we get started?

1. The Church of the Living God –Perris, was planted in July 2007 through much prayer and fasting. Yet, long before the planting of the church began, God began His work through the intercession and prayers of the current Senior Pastor, Joshua Meyers. Much like Nazareth in the biblical days of Jesus, the city of Perris once fared not much better. It was a dry, dusty transient community in many ways, consisting mostly of laborers in various fields. However, one of the treasures of this community has always been that it is resilient, multicultural and very diverse. To the more affluent, like Nazareth, there were perhaps more desirable places to live. Yet over time, just like Nazareth, the City of Perris has changed dramatically. It has

grown and has now become a wonderful place to reside. In 1996 God began to place a burden of prayer on Pastor Meyers for the city of Perris. While ministering God's Word in other places and evangelizing elsewhere too, he began to hear that still and quiet voice of the Master telling him that he would one day begin or plant a new work in Perris. Much like a conversation that Jesus once had with Peter, the Lord Jehovah spoke to the eye of the pastor's heart, telling him that if he really loved Him then he must "feed His sheep". Pastor Meyers responded by saying, "Lord, I thought I was feeding your sheep and am doing all I know how to do." Then the Lord replied in a way so clear to his heart that it could have been audible, "In the years to come you will plant a church in this city." The pastor in telling the story said, "I remember saying to the Lord at that time that we really didn't have much available to start such a work but that we did have a Word from the Lord." And that, along with much prayer, fasting and intercession was all that it took. Thus 11 years later in remarkable and supernaturally miraculous ways, the planting and establishing of God's church began. Other committed disciples of Jesus Christ began to catch the vision for a mighty work of God that would take place in Perris and spread throughout other communities, the state and eventually the world. Men and women of many nations and diversity walk hand in hand under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit as we continue to building, ministration and mission of the Church of the Living God-Perris. As Pastor Meyers once said, "I would never claim to be the founder of this work or church because since Jesus Christ was resurrected, it has always existed. We are just privileged to be a part of His work." And so The Church of the Living God exists today and the legacy continues.

2. Central to our strategy was to become intimately involved in the Perris community.
3. We will also began small groups of various kinds.
 - a. Groups for GROWTH will focus on our Worship, Word, Works philosophy of ministry within the context of relationships.
 - b. Groups for NEEDS will focus on age groups, including junior high and high school, as well as personal needs such as marriage, recovery, and finances.
 - c. Evangelistic street teams to help gather people.

This strategy was exactly the same strategy as Jesus had. He spent three years growing "down" building a core of 120 people who had the genetic code of true Christianity. On the day of Pentecost God added a crowd to the infrastructure. In the same way that the skeleton in a human body bears the weight of the flesh, so also the working core of a church will support the weight of the crowd coming to seek Christ.

5. Church Of The Living God: *how you can get involved*

A. Reading all of this, you may be at a number of places.

1. Some of you realized as you read the values and priorities of the Church of the Living God that it is not the right local church for you. That is fine. That is why we

need different kinds of churches to reach different kinds of people. Just as in shopping for clothes, I know what isn't "me."

2. Others of you like the clothes you see on the rack but need to try them on and walk around in them before you buy. This is wise shopping if you aren't exactly sure what you want. If this is you, you are welcome to check out Church of the Living God for as long as you like. We will not bug you like the clothes clerk who follows you around. We will be available to serve you when you need it.

3. But some of you shop like me. I hate shopping and know what I'm looking for when I go so I spend as little time shopping as possible. When I see what I want, I buy it and get out! If you know what you're looking for in a local church and want to dive right in, here are some ways you can get involved.

- a. Commit your life fully to Jesus Christ and be filled with his Holy Spirit!!
- b. Begin to cultivate a secret, devotional life with God.
- c. Regularly attend corporate celebrations on Sunday mornings and intercessory prayer when offered.
- d. Start to attend a small group to grow and build relationships.
- e. Begin to give of your time, energy, and resources for the work of the kingdom.
- f. Begin to discover your spiritual gifts by serving in some way.
- g. Tell your friends about God and invite them to come and check it out.

Authentic Christianity Check it out @ Church of the Living God!

SENIOR PASTOR JOSHUA MEYERS CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD