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Creating Compelling Connections to Christ

THE REPORT OF THE 2012-2013 JOEL COMMITTEE

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FROM YOUR PASTOR

FROM TIME TO TIME over the years, Frazer has found it useful to call together a unique group of lay leaders, pastors and staff for the sole purpose of dreaming dreams for the long-term future of the church. We call it a “Joel Committee.”

Why “Joel” Committee? Well, we read in Acts 2 that when the Church first began with the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter explained to everyone what was going on by quoting from the prophet Joel. God had promised through Joel that one day He would pour out His Spirit, through whom He said “your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams.”

That’s what we desire for our Joel Committee to be: **not just human opinions, but an opportunity for God’s Holy Spirit to pour out His dreams and visions for His church**, through a group of people prayerfully seeking His will. After a year of meeting together, that’s what we believe this report represents. We know we’re not perfect, but we truly believe that what you are holding is not just our ideas, but God’s dreams and visions for our church.

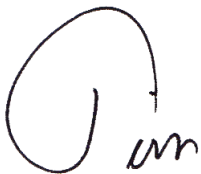
Frazer is in a good place today. **As a church, we are stable.** After several years of tumultuous transitions and some declines in our worship participation, today we are a much healthier church body, with a strong sense of unity. That is a very good thing.

However, we can’t stay “stable” forever. **We are at a tipping point.** Either we will tip towards greater decline, or we will tip towards new growth. We will either slowly turn inward and die out, or we will once again turn outward, and reach a new generation for Jesus Christ.

I believe that is God’s vision for Frazer: to create compelling connections to Jesus Christ. Jesus is first and foremost at Frazer. Because of that, **our best days are ahead of us.** Our future is even brighter than our past. Our God will once again use us mightily to build His kingdom in Montgomery and around the world. Let us be faithful to His call!

The document you are holding provides a basic overview of the findings of the Joel Committee. I ask you to read it carefully. If you have questions about it, please feel free to contact me. I also ask that you **prayerfully consider what your part will be in fulfilling God’s vision for Frazer.** At Frazer, everyone matters, and everyone ministers. We can bring these dreams to pass, but only if everyone does their part, for the good of our city and for the glory of God.

Ultimately it comes down to this: **less of me, and more of Jesus.** If you and I make that our prayer every day, individually and as a church family, I know that God will use us to change the world.



Dr. Tim Thompson
Senior Minister

BACKGROUND

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH is unchanging: **to multiply followers of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

However, the cultural context within which we carry out that mission is constantly changing. We now live in a largely post-Christian secular society that has rejected the moral, ethical, and intellectual credibility of the church. Public opinion increasingly perceives and portrays the church as bigoted, hateful, and ignorant. Young adults shy away from institutional religion. Worship attendance across the United States is declining (including at Frazer since 2008).

Even more concerning, survey after survey shows little difference in the lifestyles of those who claim Christianity compared to those who do not. Record numbers of young people raised in the church are abandoning their faith in their high school and college years. Spiritual apathy, sinful habits, selfish attitudes, and broken families plague us—even those with years of church participation.

Nevertheless, we have great hope because our God is faithful. The Holy Spirit has brought about great revivals in the past, and He can do it again.

We have a heritage of godly men and women who have gone before us. Most importantly, we have the living presence of Jesus Christ. He is not dead, He is alive, and by His Holy Spirit, He lives in us!

Everything we do in mission and ministry must be guided and evaluated by one question: how are we connecting people to Jesus?

Jesus is the only thing that makes the church unique. Jesus is all we have to offer, but Jesus is all we need! This is why in everything we do, in ministry and in mission, we must be guided by one question: how can we

create compelling connections to Jesus Christ?

Based on over a year of meeting and praying, the Joel Committee report that follows is an opportunity to reframe our thinking and refocus our energy around four basic ideas that we believe will have the greatest impact in connecting a new generation of unchurched people to Jesus.

THE DNA OF FRAZER

The DNA of our church are those values that define in practice who we are. They represent both our past heritage and our future aspirations. These seven values underly the vision outlined in this report. How well we live out these values will determine whether our strategies succeed or fail.

Jesus is first.

God's Word defines
our worldview.

Life is better together.
Growth happens in Groups.

Everyone matters.
Everyone ministers.

People invite people.
Leaders multiply leaders.

How we treat the poor and the
powerless is how we treat Jesus.

My lifelong purpose is to
love God and love people.

OVERVIEW

Based on the goal of creating compelling connections to Jesus Christ, the big picture of our vision for the next 3-5 years can be summarized in 4 key shifts:

1. We will grow bigger by growing smaller.

Our facilities at 6000 Atlanta Highway are a tremendous blessing, but our greatest potential lies in developing home-based small groups, satellite worship centers, and neighborhood outreach events where people can build authentic relationships.

2. We will grow deeper by getting back to the basics of the Bible.

Jesus is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. While our teaching and preaching has always been Bible-based, we must focus on the Word like never before. From our worship services, to our Children and Students ministries, to our Marriage and Family Ministries, everything we do should be centered on the Bible.

3. We will tell the old, old story through new technology and media.

In order to present the gospel in the “native language” of our tech-savvy, visually oriented culture, we must create video content, produced with excellence and delivered by both TV and internet. Beyond broadcasting worship services, we must leverage the compelling power of visual storytelling to connect a new generation to Jesus.

4. We will have a wider mission impact by having a narrower focus.

Concentrating our energy and resources on long-term holistic partnerships rather than short-term, shotgun-style missions is a more effective use of our resources, and it ensures that we are building the lasting relationships that can truly connect people to Jesus.

The remainder of this document provides more details on these four key shifts. The detailed findings of the various Joel Committee task forces are also available on request.

The most transforming way we connect to Jesus is through Small Groups.

Jesus told his disciples, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” It is interesting that Jesus chose to emphasize a small number rather than a large one. While on earth, Jesus taught large crowds, but his primary means of making disciples was through a small group of just 12 men who followed him, lived with him, and ministered alongside him. After Jesus commissioned his disciples in turn to “go and make disciples,” (Matthew 28:19) they used the same model, meeting not only in large groups for worship but also in homes for teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:46).

Small groups are effective for teaching because they allow us to probe deeper into God’s Word, ask questions, and encourage one another through discussion.

Small groups are effective for training because we experience opportunities to demonstrate God’s love through our various spiritual gifts as we share the ups and downs of life together.

Small groups are effective for transforming because we develop relationships of trust where real accountability can take place.

People who connect to a small group tend to stay faithful and grow to maturity in their faith, while those who never connect tend to drift away or remain spiritually immature.

The importance of reaching out to **invite friends and neighbors** will be as important as ever, but we will realign our strategy: instead of focusing on drawing people into worship first and then groups, we will draw people into groups first and from there grow our worship attendance.

KEY ACTION POINTS:

- 1. Developing Small Group leaders** is our number one volunteer priority. We will develop systems to continually identify, train, equip and mentor leaders. Every small group will aim to be a multiplying group that raises up new leaders and launches new groups from within.
- 2. Connecting new people to Small Groups** is our number one growth strategy. Inviting people to attend a group will become even more important than inviting them to attend worship. Joining a group will become even more important than church membership.
3. Small Groups will be **deployed throughout our community** in neighborhoods, workplaces and community centers to meet people where they live.
4. We will consistently preach and teach the value of **people inviting people** into groups as part of every believer’s responsibility to share the good news of Jesus.

The most basic way we connect to Jesus is through the Word of God.

Jesus is the Living Word of God (John 1:1). The Holy Spirit gives us understanding so that Christ is revealed to us in the Word (John 14:26). God has ordained that His wisdom and power be displayed to the world through the preaching of the gospel (I Corinthians 1:21). The written scriptures faithfully passed down to us in the Bible are our sufficient guide in all matters of faith and practice because they lead us to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15-16).

Howeve, our cultural context has changed from one where 50 years ago most Americans were at least somewhat familiar with the Bible, to one

where today many younger people are completely ignorant of scripture. This means we must labor even more diligently to teach God's Word to a new generation in a way they can understand and apply to life.

Nowhere is a renewed biblical world-view more needed than in the area of Marriage and Family. Our homes are devastated because we do not approach these fundamental relationships from a Christ-centered way of thinking. We must revitalize our commitment to building biblical homes through marriage and family training, education, and counseling resources.

KEY ACTION POINTS:

1. In our **worship teaching**, we will preach primarily from books of the Bible to provide a consistent scriptural foundation. Our teaching pastors will rotate more frequently between services and align their teaching even more closely in order to provide a consistent, unified message to our entire congregation.
2. In our **discipleship groups**, we will train every believer to develop a well-formed habit of regular personal reflection on the Word. We will develop and publish Bible-based daily devotions and resources.
3. Our **Children's Ministry** and **Student Ministry** will prioritize developing a deep-rooted, comprehensive biblical worldview in partnership with parents.
4. We will re-task the Frazer Counseling Center to serve as a part a larger **Marriage and Family Ministry** led by a director who will implement a comprehensive plan to provide **Marriage and Family Education and Training** along with **distinctly Christ-centered and biblically based** family counseling.

A new generation of high-tech learners connects to Jesus through Visual Media.

Connecting with people through media and technology has become an integral part of most of our lives, and if it is an important part of how people connect to people, then it is also an important part of how people connect with Jesus. Frazer has always been on the cutting edge in using media for ministry, from broadcasting on radio, to launching a low power TV station, to connecting through our website, email, and social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).

In order to stay on that cutting edge and ensure that we continue to use media to connect people to Jesus, we must continue to adapt. The television industry is changing dramatically with the arrival of HD quality, fragmentation of channels, development of DVR and rise of internet-delivered TV. We need to invest in these new technologies so that we can continue to leverage the power of video to spread the gospel.

But as important as technology is, even more important is the ability to **produce great content**

that people want to see and hear. Younger adults today are turned off by “religious broadcasting” with its “Jesus junk” for sale and glitzy TV evangelists. However, people of all ages can still be reached by a great story, and more and more churches are having success producing high quality movies and TV shows with a Christ-centered message.

In the past, Frazer’s communication media have been primarily focused on broadcasting our **worship services**. That will continue, but now we need to branch out into creating other forms of content: **interactive Bible studies, creative children’s programming, and telling the stories** of followers of Jesus in our area through a local talk-show format.

Through a **unified communication ministry** that coordinates old and new technologies, with a focus on producing high-quality, engaging content, we can use the power of media to connect a new generation to Christ.

KEY ACTION POINTS:

1. Refocus staff and studio resources on producing **great content** in four areas: worship, interactive Bible studies, creative children’s programming, and a talk-show format to tell the stories of people who are following Jesus.
2. Ensure that our programming content is designed and presented in ways that are **relevant** to a new generation and **engaging** to people outside the church.
3. Invest in HD equipment and internet-TV technology so that we maintain excellence in traditional broadcasting while in parallel developing the new digital media of the future under a single **unified Media Ministry**.

The greatest impact of our connection to Jesus comes from living on mission.

Frazer has always had a high commitment to missions. However, it hasn't always been clear what "missions" meant. To some, it meant **evangelizing the souls** of the lost; missions to them were not successful unless the ultimate result was new converts being baptized and building new churches.

To others, "missions" meant **alleviating the suffering** of the poor, the sick, "the least of these." To them, "missions" were successful if God's love was shown to a hurting person, with no further agenda imposed as to whether or not that person eventually became a Christian.

To still others, "missions" simply meant **raising funds** for missionaries and agencies; what they did with it was up to them.

What all these models have in common is that "missions" means *something we do for someone else*. We preach, we serve, we give; they receive.

Today, Frazer is embracing a new paradigm for missions that combines the best of what has

gone before, but also recognizes a new dimension: **missions is a partnership** with the people we are on mission with. That means:

- Wherever we preach and teach the gospel, we also equip local leaders and provide educational tools so that they can study and teach God's Word for themselves
- While we serve those in need, we also work alongside them find holistic solutions and build sustainable paths for them to provide for their own needs
- When we give to a missions organization, we do so as part of a long term relationship as strategic partners.

In short, it means that missions is not a **transaction** between a giver and a receiver, it is an **ongoing relationship** between people with Jesus Christ at the center. Once we grasp this, we can stop just "doing missions" and learn to **live on mission** by building Christ-centered relationships everywhere we go.

KEY ACTION POINTS:

1. Restructure our staff to bring all missional activities, from our neighborhoods to the nations, under a single Director of Missions with a single lay Missions Board so we can pursue a **unified vision and strategy**.
2. Reevaluate our missions budget, streamlining the number of supported missions agencies and projects so we can invest more deeply in **long term partnerships**.
3. Rethink our approach to missions to become **holistic, sustainable, and relational**. Train all staff and volunteer mission leaders in the principles of how to avoid the traps of toxic, transactional missions that create dependency rather than dignity.
4. Reeducate our congregation on how to "live on mission" rather than merely "do missions" or "give to missions."

Five Steps to Implementation

1. Reorganize Discipleship Ministry to focus on **Small Groups**. Conduct Small Group enrollment campaigns twice a year and a People Inviting People emphasis annually. Reinforce as a top priority in regular communication.
2. Restructure staff under a single Media Ministry director and realign and/or hire new staff with the vision to **produce media content** that engages a new generation for Christ. Invest in equipment to produce excellent broadcast and internet TV content from our worship venues, studios, and in the field.
3. Set up a schedule for rotating Teaching Pastors between worship services and develop a system for coordinating **unified worship teaching** through the books of the Bible. Review Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, and adult program areas to ensure a basic focus on developing a deep-rooted biblical worldview.
4. Hire an Executive Director of Missions. Restructure local, national and international missions into one team. Reevaluate existing and new missions commitments on the criteria of **holistic, sustainable, relational partnerships**.
5. Hire an Executive Director of Marriage and Family Education and Counseling. Implement **Marriage and Family training and education** programs. Restructure Counseling Center as determined necessary.

TOTAL RESOURCES: \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000 in new equipment, staff and operating expenses anticipated to implement this plan.

MEMBERS OF THE 2012-2013 JOEL COMMITTEE

Tim Thompson,
SENIOR PASTOR

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Thank you to all of the committee members who met together faithfully for over a year to pray, discuss ideas, and seek God's plan for Frazer.

Thanks also to the many additional individuals who contributed through the four Task Forces on Worship, TV & Technology, Missions, and Marriage & Family.

‘In the last days,’ God says,
‘I will pour out my Spirit
upon all people.
Your sons and daughters
will prophesy.
Your young men
will see visions,
and your old men
will dream dreams.
In those days I will
pour out my Spirit
even on my servants—
men and women alike—
and they will prophesy.’

Acts 2:17-18 NLT