

5 YEAR VISION



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OUR NEW CULTURE

I'm hesitant to write this short document because culture is not determined by what we write or see printed on the walls, or in a document like this. Culture is determined by what we choose to value and how we choose to act. Simply put, culture is what is done and how those things are done. Below you'll see six cultural values, think behaviours, born out of Ephesians 4.

"So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:11-13)

These cultural behaviours, think way of life, is what will inform and determine our disciple making impact. The purpose of our church is to "Go, make disciples" (Matt 28:19) and we recognize this cultural way of life, as we all eagerly adopt it, will form the environment in which discipleship in our church can flourish.

Here they are, as way of introduction, and brevity:

Mission – Our mission is to "make disciples of all nations...." (Mat 28:19) and to embody the Kingdom of God as we keep in step with the Holy Spirit. As such we will engage in specific missional activities, we will build self-sustaining teams, we will create alliances with other groups and partner with community initiatives.

Leading of the Holy Spirit – we seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, through listening prayer, discernment, and the exercise of all the spiritual gifts, in balance with the fruit of the spirit. "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Gal 5:22-23)

Faithful witness – Being ready to share the Good News and equipped to give account of our Christian faith in an informed way as we interact with others. "The task the Lord Jesus has given me.... that of testifying to the good news of God's grace." (Acts 20:24)

Prayer – "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances...." (1 Thess 5:16) Prayer is the undergirding for all our activities and evidence of our dependence on God and covenant relationship. Intercession and prophetic prayer groups, supportive prayer in a small group context, and prayer ministry for specific needs, are all components.

Hospitality – "Practice hospitality to one another..." (1 Pet 4:9). As we welcome others and model hospitality in a variety of ways - our Sunday service, small table, a chat with a neighbour, a community service, we embed hospitality as a normal part of our culture - building friendship, connection and belonging and demonstrating the love of God.

Learning – "Growing in all spiritual wisdom and understanding..." (Col 1:9) Jesus adopted a player/coach style of disciple making. They witnessed him being and doing and were then coached in their own being and doing - a walking alongside, teaching, mission assignments, challenge, correction, supportive, disciple making environment.

Of course, we'll expand on these in due course, for now, please familiarise yourself with them. You may wish to examine your own life to discern which cultural practices you are naturally gifted in and easily embody, and which one you are intimidated by. Take this to God and ask him to show you how to develop this cultural behaviour over the next season.

Vision Theological Underpinning

Document Introduction

This document is crafted to ensure that our vision is firmly rooted in Scripture. The intention is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the vision presented – whether you choose to read it from beginning to end or refer to specific sections as different elements of the vision are presented, explored, pursued, or discussed. While theological exploration allows for a broader discussion, Reverend Ralph Mayhew, the author, has deliberately provided detailed background information to ensure that we all have a solid scriptural and theological foundation to progress forward.

Church Background

The Apostle's Creed, which you see below, was formulated into the version we rely on today at around the 8th century. It was likely developed from early baptismal formulas used in the Christian Church. It comes directly from the teachings of the apostles and is a definitive statement on what the Christian faith is. New converts often recited a summary of Christian beliefs when being baptised. These became standardised over time.

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

The Nicene Creed is a close cousin of the Apostle's Creed, coming out of the Council of Nicea in 325. It is also valued in our tradition, fulfilling the same purpose as the Apostle's Creed – to hold the Church to its fundamental belief that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Vision Orientation

Our vision isn't an attempt to express our theology, it isn't a replacement of the Creeds, and in every way should complement the faith upon which we stand.

The vision is a picture of our future that we believe God has given us. It points us to what we can expect if we passionately trust, obey, follow, and love God. It is how we can understand what God has called us to in this time and place. It is reflective of what the Holy Spirit did with the early church in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the wider Roman Empire, but captured in phrases and words that allow for a pragmatic yet powerful implementation in Burleigh and the Gold Coast. It is a picture of what it means to love God and love people. It is a conveying of the commands and commission Jesus left the church.

In Mark 12:30-31, Jesus said ³⁰*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* ³¹*The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* *There is no commandment greater than these.*

The sequence of these two commandments is crucial. First, we are instructed to love the Lord our God, and then to love our neighbour. It is through our love for God that we are empowered to love others. Our own reasons for withholding love from others diminish, as we embrace and are transformed by the nature of God's unconditional love for us – despite all the reasons we might feel unworthy of such love. We are transformed to offer to those around us the same kind of love and grace that God has generously extended to us.

What's more, the love we are invited to share and experience with God, is all consuming. Your soul, mind, body, everything is touched by and summoned to encounter the love of God. This love then defines us and causes us to want to share it with those who live around us, who we come to know, who we work with or recreate with. Doing so in such a way that they experience the same love we have.

It is this love that underpins, infiltrates, and defines our vision. Without God's love first being received and then extended, we will be as Paul points out to the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 13:1 – a noisy, clanging cymbal that no one wants to be around.

Encountering and living with this love causes the words of Jesus' commission to his followers to come alive. In Matthew 28:18-20, we read ¹⁸*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy*

*Spirit,*²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. The great commission is what the great commandment looks like when being lived out. It is what it means to Love the Lord your God and love your neighbour as yourself.

It's when we move with the security we have discovered in Jesus Christ and working with Jesus, and the authority he has, that we go and make disciples. The Greek word for "make disciples" is *mathēteuō*. It's a culmination of teaching, learning, showing, helping, and intentionally enabling and instructing someone to obey what Jesus is asking of them.

The Scriptures already convey what Jesus requires concerning generosity, forgiveness, holiness, relationships, justice, the poor, money, worry and anxiety, worship, prayer, and more. The list goes on and on. Christians, according to Jesus, are charged with the responsibility of not only loving God through these actions but showing and teaching others how to learn to love God through these actions. Actions that become a way of life, known as belonging to the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven, is a biblical construct used to explain the reign and rule of God. Those who love God are eager to surrender to his rule and reign because the richness and fullness of that experience far outweighs the alternative. Baptism is the gateway into this life. As Jesus says, it is in this life, lived in the Kingdom of God, that not only can we live lives aligned with God's goodness, faithfulness, and grace, but that we also experience this *with* Jesus, immersed in his presence.

Our Vision (First Half)

These two passages, Mark 12:30-31 and Matthew 28:18-20, convey the heart behind our vision. They are anchors we must never stray from. We must hold them front and centre as they hold us to God's heart and desire for both us and the world.

Understanding that we are anchored to and compelled by God's love to love people, let's now explore how we see our vision reflected in Scripture.

The vision is two sides to the single coin. The first half expressing the internal health God is calling our church to have.

"By 2029, BVUC will be a vibrant, faithful, multi-generational church with a passionate hunger for God. We will be a unified body of believers who are being transformed into whole-of-life disciples, are unashamed in our beliefs and equipped to fulfil our calling, using our unique gifts to serve..."

“By 2029, BVUC will be a vibrant, faithful, multi-generational church with a passionate hunger for God.”

It is likely too grand claim to say that our hope is that these words reflect what the Holy Spirit was doing in Acts 2:42-47 ⁴²*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* ⁴³*Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.* ⁴⁴*All the believers were together and had everything in common.* ⁴⁵*They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.* ⁴⁶*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,* ⁴⁷*praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

However, our hope is that it is this experience we can re-live, allowing for the fundamentally different culture we live in now compared to the one they lived in then.

The apostles, and those who came to faith in the early church, lived with a devotion to what the Bible sometimes calls the bride of Christ, and sometimes calls the body of Christ. They understood that the church wasn’t a human solution of what to do with a bunch of Christians, but it was a divine mandate created by God to change the world. The first Christians we see in Acts were wholeheartedly devoted to that and what God would do with them. They hunger after God together to this end, eager to gain as much of God’s presence, wisdom, character and heart as they could. We know that God wants this for us. Knowing that as God fills us more frequently and more powerfully, extraordinary wonders will take place not just in our lives and our church but in the world in which we live.

As reflected consistently in Scripture, these aspects of **vibrant, faithful, multi-generational are postures of service and giving. Our vision is about who God is calling us to be, not what God is going to give us. In Acts 2:17, Peter quotes the prophet Joel, ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.’** Peter’s words are a spiritual claim that what was once prophesied is now taking place. Regardless of any human constraint that can be put on a person (including age or gender), every person has a spiritual contribution to make to the Kingdom of God. A contribution that can be made as the Spirit of God is poured out upon them. To be **vibrant, faithful and multi-generational** is for every person in the church, regardless of age or any other factor, to have the opportunity and encouragement to contribute their gifts toward God's vision.

“We will be a unified body of believers”

We then see an incredible testimony of their unification. They were together in a world that sought to tear them apart and dismantle them. They found to be of one mind and one heart,

knowing that the world's power would be diminished as their strength together grew. What is more is that it was all believers – male and female, every age, every walk of life, every surrounding culture – they laid down their own agenda to take up God's. An agenda of love. Everyone found a way to contribute to the health of the church, by giving back what God had given them, in order to be part of what God was creating. That which he was creating was the Church, a movement unlike anything the world had ever seen, selfless, passionate, convicted, and hungry for sin to lose its grip on peoples' lives.

“who are being transformed into whole-of-life disciples, are unashamed in our beliefs”

They were unashamed of the Gospel that had saved them. The entirety of their lives was offered to Jesus as an act of worship, echoing what Paul would later write to the church in Rome (Rom 12:1-2). The early church was a picture of what it means to be a whole-of-life disciple. A picture God wants to create again with us, establishing our security and reliance on the saving grace of God, to the point we are compelled with excitement to share it with others.

God called this group of believers together, forming what we call the Church. The Church is a movement of people who love the world so powerfully. They are convinced of God's care, concern, and compassion for them, that they might turn to this God out of adoration for him, to receive the fullness of what God did for them.

“and equipped to fulfil our calling, using our unique gifts to serve.”

In the fourth chapter of Ephesians Paul, in what is an incredible body of writing, that paints a glorious picture of God's intention for the church writes:

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to equip his people (the church) for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Christ established this leadership structure in and for the church to ensure all who became part of the body of Christ would discover, use, and grow in their gifts to equip the church to be built up in unity, maturity and impact on the world. These five gifts – apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers – are what has been deemed over the years as “The five-fold Ministry”. It needs to be said that there is a vast array of biblical commentators who differ slightly and extravagantly on what these passages mean and how they can be interpreted. So, what you read next is not a comprehensive summary of all biblical analysis.

It is safe to conclude that the gifts mentioned above are from Jesus, a member of the Holy Trinity. They can be understood in the same manner we understand the other mentions of

spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12, Rom 12, 1 Pet 4, etc). Those gifts are imparted to people (who are the church) to serve and benefit the lives of others. That service is about the equipping and edification of the church, so it can be healthy in order to advance, with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God in this world.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 *‘There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ‘There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.’There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ‘Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

There are many gifts to be used in different ways but all for the same end. Paul explains to the Ephesians that this is to equip and edify the Body of Christ. In light of this, I’ve found it helpful to understand the five-fold ministry as a framework of how God intends the other gifts of the spirit to work. Each gift is an expression of one of these categories if you like: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.

So, the gift of healing might sit under the pastor category (for want of better word), the gift of leadership under the apostle category, the gift of teaching under teacher, the gift of discernment under prophecy and so on. All the while each gift can be used in other areas too. Administration might be vital to the expression of the apostle gift, as well as unique to establishing Pastoral care. Healing is a wonderful pastoring gift as well as a powerful evangelism gift.

There is a temptation seen across the western church for pride to seep in as people claim titles for themselves, e.g. of apostle, or prophet. This is not a reflected desire in anything Paul or Jesus say. Instead, these gifts are given and function to serve the Church in transforming the world.

You have gifts given to you by God and are called to be part of this. That is what our vision is about, that every person who calls BVUC home will recognise how God has gifted them, that that gifting is given as a blessing to the church, and we each have a responsibility to develop our giftedness to bless others.

Our Vision (Second Half)

All that has been said so far creates a wonderful, healthy, and strong foundation to embrace the second half of the vision God has given us.

“... We will be known across Burleigh and have a Kingdom presence and impact in targeted corners of our community, where people will be overwhelmed by the love of Jesus, drawn to an irresistible hope and transformed by the Gospel. We see our place on the hill in the centre of Burleigh fit to serve our local needs and a gathering place

where people are brought from far and wide, and we see a church that is multiplying across the region with a local and wider impact for His glory."

"We will be known across Burleigh and have a Kingdom presence"

Jesus instructed as he taught all those who would listen, to seek first the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is where God's reign and rule is. The Kingdom of God is a present reality, centred on living in the realm of God's effective will, and involves a deep transformation of one's life to align with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

Dallas Willard, in his work, *Living in Christ's Presence: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God*, said "Living in the Kingdom of God is a matter of living with God's action in our lives."

Willard would say the Kingdom of God is the range of God's effective will, where what God wants done, is done. It is about living in the reality of God's rule and reign in every aspect of life. Both as individuals and as a group of people (called the church).

This means that our presence in Burleigh, is identified where that which we offer and those who we meet are invited to participate in the reality of God's rule and reign in every aspect of life. It's more than just community service, we are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, and our work in the community needs to be designated as such.

"and impact in targeted corners of our community"

The mission of the church was first described in Acts 1:8 as *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Which was a very specific strategic approach.

Later in Acts 8:1, just before Paul's dramatic conversion when he set about destroying the church we read, *"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."*

Their focus became Judea and Samaria. We then know through Stephen's testimony to the Eunuch that the Gospel spread to Ethiopia. Paul's missionary journeys were also strategic, ignoring some places and going to other places that God intentionally led them to. This is our mandate, not to try and reach every person in Burleigh, but to be intentional towards specific people groups, locations and/or organisations that we call 'corners', that they may experience the Kingdom of God.

"where people will be overwhelmed by the love of Jesus, drawn to an irresistible hope and transformed by the Gospel."

The defining factor that must not only guide but determine our movement is love. Everywhere Jesus went people were overwhelmed by the love of Jesus and drawn to an irresistible hope, causing them to be transformed by the Gospel. Everyone from the woman caught in adultery, Nicodemus the Pharisee, the bleeding woman, the lame man through the roof, and countless other stories, experienced an incredible love and hope when they encountered Jesus. As a Christians we are gifted with this love, which Jesus displayed and offered to us through the Cross. It's ours to offer to others and as we do we discover our experience of the intensity of it forever increases in our lives.

The Apostle Paul lived a life overwhelmed with this love and wanted other to know it to, as he shares when he writes to Ephesus *"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."* (Ephesians 3:17-19) This is the gift, the power, and the grace we have to offer the world. A world thirsting for it, while drinking from a toxic well.

"We see our place on the hill in the centre of Burleigh fit to serve our local needs and a gathering place where people are brought from far and wide,"

When the church was born, buildings were simply a tool, forever changing to accommodate the growth of the church. It was three hundred years until the church had a designated building it would meet in. They could not have dreamt that 1,700 years later, an fluid movement of people would so easily refer to themselves as a building 'I'm going to church.' We live in a world now where nearly everyone thinks of the church as a building. This is completely opposed to the idea Jesus had of the church, which is a movement (Mat 16:18).

However, if we read through at Acts 13, 14, we find phrases like:

^{13:5} *When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.*

^{13:6} *They travelled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.*

^{13:14} *On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."*

^{13:42} *As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath.*

^{13:44} *On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.*

^{14:1} *At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.*

^{14:3} *So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.*

These patterns can be seen through all of Paul's missionary journeys. As he went from place to place, he would locate the local synagogue (the Jewish place of worship), a town meeting place or a wealthy person's property, which would serve the proclamation of the Gospel. Paul was intentional about seeing buildings God gifted humanity, used for the glory of God, which was defined by preaching the Gospel.

I honestly think Paul would be confused by our buildings called churches. But we have them, and they are part of the culture, rhythm, and presence of our communities. So, the question our vision answers is: "How will we use our buildings to make missionaries and to be missional, doing this in recognition of how Paul approached communities on his missionary journeys?"

"and we see a church that is multiplying across the region with a local and wider impact for His glory."

The church multiplying is the fulfilment of everything Jesus commanded. Healthy things grow (Jn 15), they multiply and spread organically. His commission (Matt 28:18-20) was to do certain things, and if effective in the doing of those things (see above), the church would grow in number. Acts saw an instant multiplication as 3,000 people were filled with the spirit and put their faith in Jesus (Acts 2:41). The rest of the book clearly shows how the church was first scattered (Acts 8:1), leading to multiplication, and then later it grew through the missionary efforts of Paul, Peter, Silas (Acts 13-14, 16-18, 18-20) and many others. Growth and multiplication are in the DNA of the church.

We see in Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* The church receives the power of God from the Holy Spirit and moves outwardly. They begin in Jerusalem, travel outwardly to Judea, then into Samaria, and after that there is no limit to the spread of the Gospel. We too are called to mirror this pattern, with the chief measure of success being bringing glory to God.

Document Conclusion

If you've ever read a theological text before, you'll know it's impossible to say everything that needs to be said and tie up every loose end. Theology, and our interpretation of the Scripture is a team sport, so this document is not the be-all-and-end-all, it's not all there is to say, it's not even comprehensive and thorough. But it is a start to help us see how God is breathing through his Word into our world.

Thank you for reading this document. It means a lot to me, and even more to our church. We cannot afford to be theologically uninformed, especially about matters pertaining to the future course God has plotted for us. You will no doubt hear lots of this material preached over the coming weeks, months, and years. I wanted to take the time and respect of the Scriptures to show how the vision we have from God is congruent with what God says and who God is (John 1).

Much love, Ralph