



June 1, 2016

Dear Members and Friends,

The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a season for every activity under the heavens. As we enter into the season of summer, we also enter into an exciting season at West Hills Church.

Beginning last September the Session and Staff began to read four books together. Those four books were: *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, *Simple Church* by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Sticky Church* by Larry Osborne and *Mission Drift* by Peter Greer and Christ Horst. We read a book a month and then had a time of discussion on each book. The purpose of reading the books was to foster discussion amongst the leadership and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit on how West Hills Church might become an even more effective church in the Kingdom of God. I also invited you to read these books and share your thoughts with me at several listening sessions that I hosted.

After finishing the books and the book discussions, the Session and Staff also went away for a retreat at the beginning of this year. At the retreat we began to piece together an outline of how West Hills Church might bring clarity and focus to our mission as a church. The retreat was a solid start and the discussions continued through May of this year. Now we are ready and excited to share with you the conclusions of our deliberations and prayers.

The first result is that, instead of having a vision statement and a mission statement, we will now have one combined statement for the church. Having one statement will facilitate people knowing and internalizing the statement. Our new mission statement is: **On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, Others and the World.**

As you will notice the first part of the mission statement is the former vision statement of the church. This statement encompasses the past and the present and serves as a guiding principle for the future of West Hills Church. The second part of the mission statement is a discipleship plan or path because each phrase is meant to convey action and steps on our journey.

The phrase “connecting with God,” is meant to delineate the centrality and the importance of both private and corporate worship in our lives. Christ centered, Biblically focused and joyful worship has always been a core value at West Hills and this phrase is meant to cement that core value. The phrase also means that we recognize and place a high value on our worship service not only for our members and friends but also for people who are searching for the truth in Jesus Christ.

The phrase “connecting with Others,” is meant to highlight the importance of striving to live out authentic relationships with other people. The first step in this process may be to connect with others at fellowship events which we will call Connection Points. An additional step would be to take a Get Connected Class which will be our new member class. However, “connecting with Others,” will most fully be lived out by joining a Connection Group.

A Connection Group is a small group model based off the Sunday message and the questions which are printed in the bulletin. Connection Groups will meet for a specific amount of time; anywhere from eight to ten weeks, three times a year. The hope is that people will find a lifelong connection with others in these groups and stay with the same group for years but it is not required. In addition, we will ask each Connection Group to plan one social outing and one service outing together per session.

We will be asking current Covenant Groups to pivot to the Connection Group model but that decision will be left up to the Covenant Group. Connection Groups and Covenant Groups are similar however there are distinctions. These distinctions and other clarifications will be highlighted in more detail on June 12th.

The phrase “connecting with the World,” reaffirms West Hills’ core value of being involved actively in God’s mission. We connect with the world when we are involved in mission. Mission means living out our faith both inside and outside the walls of West Hills. Connecting with the world is a call to be the hand and feet of Jesus in this world and to make our life a mission.

A second result of the Session and Staff conversations is that we will do our best to honor your time. This will mean trying to schedule special events when Connection Groups are not in session. It will also mean trying to hold meetings and other events when people are already at church so that you are not asked to come back to the church more than is necessary. Time is valuable and we want to do our best to respect your time so that you can spend more time with your families and more time making friends that you can then invite to church.

A third result of the Session and Staff conversations is that we will seek to have all ages study the same passage of scripture every week. Meaning that what the children study in Sunday School will be the same passage of the scripture the youth study and the same passage that is covered in the worship service. The purpose of this result is to bring greater alignment at West Hills and facilitate ongoing faith discussions during the week and in our homes. Admittedly this will take some time to coordinate but we believe it will have very positive effects.

I realize that this information is a lot to process but wanted you to have a clear understanding of this exciting new vision. I ask that you would pray about your processing and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about this new mission statement and plan. I also realize that you may have many questions. Because of this I invite you to attend the town hall meeting on June 12th after the third service in the sanctuary. At this meeting we will be able to go more in depth and try to answer all of your questions. I will also be holding some feedback and listening sessions after June 12th. The first session will be held on June 14th from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at the church. The second session will be held on June 15th from 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. at the church; please feel free to bring your lunch. The third session will be held on July 3rd at church after the third service.

I want to thank you as a congregation for being so accepting of the changes that have already been made at West Hills. Our path forward is an inspiring one, and as we move forward I would remind us all that God is still on the throne.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Derek