

Shape & Direction



2006

Plotting a course for the future, building a vessel to take us there!

"A ship in the harbour is safe... but that is not what ships are built for."

During the last months of 2004 we spent some time as a congregation considering the present and future 'shape and direction' we should pursue as TCF. In mid 2005 Leadership prepared and presented, and the congregational meeting overwhelmingly supported and adopted this "Shape and Direction" for TCF.

Twelve months on - lets have another look! Much of this is word-for-word from the original report - with updates to indicate which of the proposed elements have been implemented, and which are still to be realised.



Background and approach.

"A Church Committed to Meeting the Needs of Our Generation"

During a series of messages in 2004, Pastor Chris stated that he wanted to 'put legs' under the vision statement TCF has had since its inception. To do that we needed to work backwards, looking at who 'OUR GENERATION' are, considering what 'NEEDS OF' our generation we should try to meet. Then asking ourselves who and what is being 'COMMITTED'. With those things considered, it was then time to see what shape and direction the 'CHURCH' should take. All this while remembering that we are just 'A' part of the wider church in Torquay and the Surfcoast, being aware of who we share the call to this region with.

Conclusions reached.

Our Generation

A short definition would be families with children at school or younger. Three quarters of the population fit this description, whether that be in two parent or single parent families.

In one sense it is true that *everyone* who is part of our community is 'our generation', and of course our 'mission' encompasses taking the Gospel to 'all' the world. However, there are changes we can make, or more specifically additional things we can do, to make TCF a place where those who comprise the bulk of 'our generation' can more easily come and be reached with the love of Christ.

Meeting the Needs

A living relationship with God and with other people.

The 'felt' needs of many revolve around materially providing for their families in terms of housing, education, and entertainment. Personally they have needs in developing skills in the relationships that matter to them, with their spouse and their families. Beyond these felt needs (of which they are aware to varying degrees) are underlying needs to understand who they are and why they exist. The key to this is found through the ultimate need outlined above.

Jesus encourages us to find our purpose through his command to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself". These cannot be separated, and our love for God is to be partnered with our love for our neighbours (our generation!) in the hope it will also bring them to an awareness of God's love for them.

Committed

Our Selves, Our Time, Our Finances

TCF comprises just over 100 regular 'adults'. (if 'regular' is defined as come repeatedly even if only once in 6 weeks). There are a regular core of 40 that are almost always in attendance, and another 40 or so that attend about half the time.

A target of \$100,000 for the financial year was set in the budget for 05/06.. While our present budget is a good description of our current position, as it stands it does not in the opinion of leadership reflect what we should or could be spending on ministry projects.

A

'A' is a small word but a critical one. God looks beyond our walls to see us as part of 'the Church in Torquay'. If we are able to work to bless and increase other congregations with as much interest as we do our own we will work more to the pattern God has, rather than build empires of our own devising.

Church

To close we at last come to the question of what shape and direction we as a 'church' should assume.

Ultimately, the shape we should assume is the shape of a body, the body of Christ with Him as the head. More specifically, TCF should begin to look something like a starfish or octopus, reaching into many areas through the 'members' of our congregation.

TCF should become a place that facilitates spending time in relationship with those not yet committed to Christ. Part of that facilitating will be to NOT run too many programmes to which everyone is expected to come, but part of it will be running programmes to which you will feel comfortable inviting friends, and part of it will be to provide 'pre-evangelism' opportunities by hosting events that serve to break down people's reluctance to ever enter a church facility.

Things we were doing that have continued!

- The various small groups that currently meet continue within the envisioned 'shape' of TCF.
- Use a 'style' for worship services that engages 'our generation'

Our present style of service with casual dress, music, speech and visuals is one that most of the un-churched of 'our generation' will best cope with. That is not to say it is much less threatening or alien

to their minds than a 'four hymn sandwich'. If we think about it, many of the things we do in a church service are far removed from everyday experience. Thus it is important we regularly explain what we are doing and why.

- Provide for school age children as part of our Sunday worship.
- Meet and work with other local congregations.

Aside from the spiritual dynamic that this introduces, it is great to present a unified 'church' to those we live amongst. As suggested in the original "Shape & Direction" 2006 saw a combined Easter Dawn Service!

- Support Foreign Missions.



Things we planned that have been implemented fully or partially.

- We said "To help us be intentional in our mission to school age kids and their parents it is important that TCF **develop a Children's pastor position**. It is leadership's intention that a part-time (1.5-2 days per week) Children's pastor be introduced. This person would serve as a catalyst to gather, envision and energise a team interested in the kids of our town. We see this team extending beyond members of our own congregation."

What we have done is install Danny Ashley as "Associate Pastor for Community Life", with an initial brief for school age kids, but not limited to that alone!

This has seen great fruit already- with our kids church growing from around 6-7 a week to almost 20 a week regularly attending! Also the paid 'anchor' has seen more volunteers involved than was previously the case - with everyone enjoying themselves and feeling energised rather than drained by the programme.

- We said "Introduce an alternate service. At present we would intend to **begin an alternatively timed evening hour long service** which would repeat the morning message. This may not be every week but would be at least twice a month."

What we have done is a fortnightly Sunday evening service. This is not a duplicate of the morning message, but has been a variety of speakers and styles. We have seen anywhere from 10 to almost 50 attend. Often some who come do not or can not make it to our regular morning service, so this reaches them and their friends.

- We said" Encourage various **electronic methods for giving** so that even when members are not here, their financial support still is flowing for the work of the Kingdom of God

More people use this than previously, but it is still only a very few. We have dated envelopes to help people keep track of giving, but need to perhaps look further at ways to enable giving by direct transfer, EFTPOS or other.

- We said "**Present a consistent identity**."

What we have done is update our previous logo using similar elements, modernising them and localising them for a coastal mindset.

We have re-badged the church and added street signage - and have consolidated our existing online www presence.

- We have sold 20 Pearl St, relocated the shop to 35 Boston Rd foyer, and released the funds to other ministry areas.

Things we mentioned that need to be realised/implemented.

- We said “Be prepared to pay to **staff child care** during services and some other church functions. This may appear extravagant until you ask families what they would most like to help them enjoy and be built up by church involvement.”

This is currently on the agenda, with advertising beginning to find suitable persons.

- We said “We could **develop a presence in the community** at things such as the regular Cowrie markets, the High Tide festival and perhaps even work towards instigating some Christian content music presentations in the form of a mini-festival some time during the year.”

Some very preliminary work has been done in these areas. Watch for more! Pray!

- We said “Support Local Mission. TCF could allocate money and encourage people’s participation, as part of the missions effort, to **local evangelism projects**.”

Various church programs, such as the fellowship teas, and ladies nights are intended as events that give an opportunity for us to invite friends - a first step in building a relationship between them and God. We see this happening already, but maybe there are more ideas we could harness.

How have we resourced, and how do we continue to resource all this?

Rather than our available resources driving our vision, we need to allow our vision to call upon our resources.

We make use of the giving we receive in various ways. 10% is allocated to missions work, primarily overseas mission, the rest maintains our facility and provides for local ministry and missions work.

We sold the 20 Pearl St property and paid off the BUV loans on 35 Boston Rd – The saved mortgage payments and the investment interest from the balance fund the “Community Life” Pastor position one day a week, and went towards firming up TCF’s ability to pay the Senior Pastor position as full-time, where previously it had been 4 days a week. A second day per week of the “Community Life” position was funded for 12 months by special giving.

We seek to be wise in the use of the resources available to us, but our vision should draw on - and challenge us to grow our resources. We should not let our resources limit our vision. A phrase I heard recently sums it up very well - we should be less concerned about what we have to live on, and more active about what we have to live for!

Some may consider our church to be in a good financial position being now ‘debt free’. This is far from the truth - financially we may no longer have a mortgage or loan with the BUV - but Romans 13:8 challenges us to remember the debt that we do owe - one still outstanding to love one another, and to seek the lost.

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8, NIV.

Closing comments

Last year we “launched” this shape and direction challenged by the phrase “*A ship in the harbour is safe... but that is not what ships are built for.*” and we noted that “Neither are churches.”

This year it is time to continue our journey asking God to give each one of us as individuals, and all of us together “*A picture of the future that inspires passion*”. A vision for the people God loves.