

# VISION 2019

*Growth Group Guide*

# FOCUSING OUR VISION

## Sharpening our Prayers and Goals for Mitchelton Presbyterian Church in 2019

### *Growth Group Discussion Guide*

It takes a whole lot more than a few words to describe what a church should **be**. In fact, the New Testament is brimming with advice and instruction from Jesus and his apostles on how to live as *'the Kingdom of God'* on planet earth. It's a life-consuming challenge.

On the other hand, it's helpful to try to figure out the basic building blocks of living together for Jesus... and to keep a simple checklist close at hand to make sure the big issues are always being covered.

Last year a team of members from across our congregations developed a fresh vision statement which we adopted as a church. It expresses both our vision and key commitments:

***Our vision is to be a vibrant gathering of all kinds of people, united by God's Spirit in our common commitment to growing as followers of Jesus.***

- We will make every effort to engage our community and invite people to follow Jesus with us.
- We'll be welcoming and open, a church where everyone is valued and included.
- Our Bible Teaching will be clear, promoting the good news of Jesus in a way all people can understand.
- Together, we will show the love of Jesus in the way we serve one another, our neighbours, our city and our world.
- We'll equip and encourage all to grow and serve, and invest in the future by training the next generation of gospel leaders.
- We'll keep exploring new times and places to gather as God's people, adding fresh ways to deepen our love for God and one another.
- We will pray for our mission, demonstrating our dependence on God's grace, mercy and provision.

After prayerful deliberation and lots of debate, the ministry team and Board of Elders **have agreed on four key words** that summarise our vision and will help shape and measure our church life; and guide you as our church members along a pathway to maturity. Colin Marshall's book "The Trellis and the Vine" makes a distinction between the systems and patterns that a church sets up (the 'trellis'), and the healthy 'vine' of spiritual growth that springs up around it. These are trellis words that describe the shape and intention of our ministry together at MPC.

What are the four key words? You'll need to keep reading. But here's a hint...



# THE STORY OF THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

THE ACCOUNT OF THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH EXTENDS FROM ACTS CHAPTER 11 TO 18. IT'S A GREAT MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE AND STRATEGIC MINISTRY. READ THE KEY SECTIONS BELOW.

## The birth of the Church in Antioch

Acts 11:19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, **went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also**, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and **they sent Barnabas to Antioch**. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 *He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.*

25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he **brought him to Antioch**. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

27 During this time some prophets **came down from Jerusalem to Antioch**. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul...

## Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

12:25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they **returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark...**

13:1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and **sent them off**. 4 **The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus**. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. [They went to Cyprus, Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe...]

## The Return to Antioch in Syria

21 They preached the gospel in Derbe and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Pisidia, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into

Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From Attalia they sailed **back to Antioch**, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 **And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.**

## Trouble comes to town

15:1 Certain people **came down from Judea to Antioch** and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. 3 **The church sent them** on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and **send them to Antioch** with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. 23 With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,  
*To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.*

*24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. 25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.*

*Farewell.*

30 So the men were sent off and **went down to Antioch**, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. 31 The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.

32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. 33 After spending some time there, they were **sent off by the believers** with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. 35 But **Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch**, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

## FOR GROUP REFLECTION

What activity and action gave birth to the church at Antioch? How is this an example of God bringing good from a bad situation?

What **words** birth churches?

What examples do you see of people **inviting others** to follow Jesus with them?

Identify and mark people and actions that bring about spiritual **growth** and encouragement. What are they doing? (The *italics* should help you find them in the passage.)

What kind of speaking and listening bring conversion and **growth**?

What instance of practical **love** and 'welfare assistance' do you see in the passage? (Hint - look around 11:27-30.)

How does the gospel motivate practical care across boundaries?

Trace the comings and goings between churches shown in **bold type**. What kinds of '**sending**' can you identify?

How can 'sending' bring growth?

What roles do the Father, the Lord Jesus, and The Spirit have in this account of the spread and growth of the church?

Why do they pray?





## INVITE

Inviting others to follow Jesus with us.



## GROW

Growing like Jesus together



## LOVE

Loving like Jesus



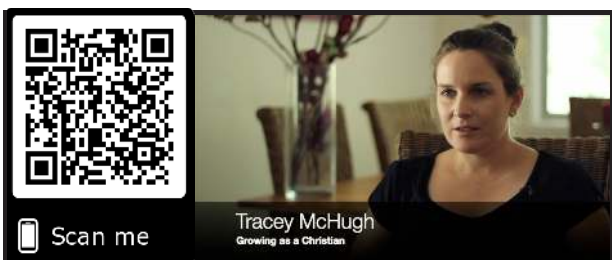
## SEND

Sending ambassadors of Jesus

*We're convinced that a church that's inviting, growing, loving and sending in the ways described above is a healthy, well balanced church. Better still, the words describe a sequence or a cycle that creates kingdom multiplication as, like the church in Antioch, we invest in gospel work beyond ourselves.*

### Discussion

1. Imagine you're a newcomer at MPC who has decided to think about the Christian faith. How could we best show you that we'd love you to 'follow Jesus with us'? What do we need to do differently?
2. How can your church family help you as an *individual* to **invite** others to follow Jesus? What opportunities are there for that?
3. We believe that spiritual **growth** (becoming more like Jesus) happens through consistently listening to and responding to God's Word, encouraging one another in prayer and song, and meeting together regularly to share life. Scan the QR code to watch the video of Tracey and talk about her experience.



4. Jesus says that people will know we are his disciples by the way we **love** one another (John 13:35). Ultimately that's up to each of us as individuals. But as a church, we can organise opportunities to care for one another, and grow in community, and show the love of Jesus to the world.

i) How do you see us doing that?

ii) How can you help?

5. At MPC we have a history of **sending** and supporting new leaders and new churches, and so spreading the gospel of Jesus however we can. But first and foremost, we want to prepare and send you and every other Christian into the neighbourhoods and workplaces of Brisbane as effective ambassadors of Jesus.

i) How can we do that better?

ii) Pray that God will give opportunities to send and support another plant group in the future.

*If you have time, go back to the longer version of our vision on the front page and see if the dot points align with "Invite-Grow-Love-Send." During 2019 (and beyond) we'll be doing our best to shape our ministries and teams around these four key goal areas. Think and pray together about how that might look for MPC. If you'd like to send feedback, email [info@mpc.org.au](mailto:info@mpc.org.au) (or just scan the QR code to get started.)*

