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Pataskala Church of the Nazarene
February 25, 2007

What Is God Calling The Pataskala Church of the Nazarene to Do in 2007-08?

Scripture Proverbs 29:18; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Introduction:

Most of us would remember the movie Apollo 13.

I remember I was captivated as I watched the NASA launches and I especially remember when the SPECIAL REPORT came on TV and we were told about the explosion that crippled the spacecraft Apollo 13.

I stayed glued to the tube for that entire week praying for Jim Lovell and his crew.

Of course, if you remember this we probably all prayed.

It was just as the film showed it. The explosion left those three men with almost no electrical power which meant they had no heat.

For a time we worried about their having enough air. Plus they were forced to use the little engine of the lunar lander because the main engine in the command module no longer functioned.

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And as time went by they kept having problems. The carbon dioxide level in the ship got too high so they had to design and build a scrubber using parts from their space suits.

One of the men got very sick. They were low on fuel so the only way they could figure how to get home was to use the gravity of the moon as a sling shot to hurl them back toward earth.

That worked but as they drew near Earth again, thinking they had finally solved every possible problem, Houston told them they had to make a course correction in order to have any hope of a safe splash down in the Pacific ocean.

Here's a clip from the movie that picks up at that point.

CLIP FROM APOLLO 13 starting with "Day 6"

Now—do you understand what happened? They didn't have enough electricity to use the computer to steer as they made this critical 39 second burn so Lovell came up with the idea of using the planet earth—their goal destination—as their point of reference.

He knew that as long as they were able to keep it in view through the window they'd be okay. And it worked. It was probably the most stressful 39 seconds of their lives but it worked.

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Lovell and his crew kept their goal in sight and were able to steer to a safe re-entry. By not losing sight of that reference point, those three astronauts avoided disaster.

Spiritual Application:

Now, I have shared this brief little clip this morning because I think it illustrates a very important principle of church health and growth.

You see, WE can avoid disaster as long as we keep our focus fixed on OUR destination. DO I have to remind you - Our final destination is Heaven.

I mean, if we have clear goals and clear strategies to steer towards our goal of fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment—if we know where we're going as a church family and keep headed in that direction—we can accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God.

But without this sense of direction—without a clear vision, as Solomon reminds us in Proverbs 29:18, **“we perish.”**

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

And, unfortunately the sad truth is many churches perish instead of prosper.

Pastor Joe and I were talking about this verse yesterday and Joe told me that so often people misinterpret this verse. The verse is saying without a vision – it's not that unsaved people will

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necessarily perish, but the church will perish because they have lost sight of the vision.

They cease to grow because they don't have a clear vision to lead them on towards what God wants from them.

If the church doesn't keep sight of the Vision of Lost people, then eventually the Church perishes.

I mean, they don't know why they are, where they are—they don't know what they are supposed to be doing.

They've never sought God's will when it comes to the unique contribution they are supposed to bring to His Kingdom and so they just sort of go through the motions of being a church.

If nothing happens to change this, they eventually become just an empty shell.

Outside they LOOK like a church but nothing significant happens inside.

I served in a church like that once—and it was a very sad, frustrating experience.

I can understand why J. B. Phillips would warn,

“The real danger to professing Christians lies not in the more glaring and grosser temptations and sins but rather in a slow deterioration of vision.”

My greatest concern as your pastor is that we do not become the Laodicean Church which is asleep in America.

God help us not to be spiritually slumbering when the world is headed towards hell.

Now, one thing that has always impressed me about PCN is that this is a church that believes in having a clear purpose or vision.

Dru and I noticed this about you the moment I first came to be your pastor almost 7 years ago. The very thing that impressed us was the potential this church had. I’ve not changed my belief in this, because the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene still has the potential of any church in our district.

We weren’t discouraged about coming to you to be your pastor, although some of you will recall the pain this church went through previous to us coming.

We just felt the Lord had specifically called us to be here as your pastor.

We learned very quickly that PCN has never “played” at being a church.

Its members never just go through the motions. Don’t get me wrong. We’re far from perfect.

But it seems to me that the pillars of this church—the main core of this body of believers—has always sought God’s will as to what He wants them to do and that’s one of the reasons it is so fulfilling to be here.

Most of us know we don’t have time to mess around but I sincerely believe if this church had one voice, we could look back over its 42 year history and hear it said again and again, “Tell us what to do God and we’ll do it.”

In fact the church board, staff and I keep saying this is what we want here at PCN.

Last year our staff went away for a weekend retreat to find out some very important things about each other and the importance of team unity.

In the next few weeks, our Church board is going to spend some time together over a week-end to discover where it is that God wants us to go as a church and then plan on how to get there.

This morning I want to take my sermon time to explain the VISION I feel God is directing our church—those specific missions and ministries that we SEE God leading us to accomplish in the coming Church year that begins April 1.

Now before we go any farther let me remind you exactly what VISION is.

According to Bill Hybels—and I like his definition—a vision is, “**...a picture of the future that produces passion.**”

We have just come out of The Quest, finding The Power to become Free. What a blessing it was to learn about the Holy Spirit and how He works in our lives individually and the collective church family here.

My hope and prayer is that in the next 30 minutes or so I'll be able to give you at least a mental picture of our future as a church that will excite you, stretch your faith and ignite YOUR passion as we steer toward what His church could become.

Now to IGNITE our passion, one thing I think we must remember, is the fact that what we do as a local church MATTERS in our community and our world.

What we do as CHRISTIANS makes a real difference.

In fact no other human organization even comes close to having the positive impact on humanity that we do.

In his book *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels talks about this. Referring to Washington, D.C. where most of us work he said,

“What I discovered was not how powerful those people are, but how limited their power really is. All they can do is rearrange the yard markers on the field of life. They can't change a human heart. They can't heal a wounded soul. They can't turn hatred into love. They can't bring about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace. They can't get to the core problem! Businessmen can provide sorely needed jobs. Wise educators can teach useful knowledge of the world. Self-help programs can offer effective methods of behavior modification. Advanced psychological techniques can aid self-understanding. And all this is good, but can any of it truly transform the human heart? I believe that only one power exists on this sorry planet that can do that. It's the power of the love of Jesus Christ—the love that conquers sin and wipes out shame and heals wounds and reconciles enemies and patches broken dreams and ultimately changes the world one life at a time. And what grips my heart every day is the knowledge that the radical message of that transforming love has been given to the church.

This means the future of the world rests in the hands of local congregations like yours and mine. It's the church or its lights out. Without churches so filled with the power of God that they can't help but spill goodness and peace and love and joy into the world, depravity will win the day; evil will flood the world. But it doesn't have to happen that way. Strong, growing communities of faith can turn the tide of history.”

Do you understand what Hybels is saying here?

He's saying that we are on the front lines people, because we are the body of Christ—we are the flesh He is using to accomplish His eternal purposes.

With Him as our head what we do always makes a difference—a difference that no other human organization even comes close to making.

Does that basic fact ignite your passion? It does mine! It charges me!

The truth is there is nothing you can do in this life that will have more significance than serving in a local church!

Now before we “get to this vision”—when it comes to this next year, let me remind you once again WHY we do what we do here at PCN...

why we worship,

why we study God's Word,

Why we minister to physical needs and spiritual needs,

What it is that makes our fellowship here so sweet—AND HERE IT IS...here's your reminder! It is our mutual experience of the unmerited GRACE of God!

You see, in this church we know that Jesus died for us—and so there isn't anything—ANYTHING—we wouldn't do for Him! We are literally DRIVEN/ CALLED by the Grace of God.

It's the WHY behind every WHAT that we do.

It's the rocket engine that propels us forward as we steer ourselves to the center of God's will.

We understand the lyrics from the old hymn, “**Love so amazing—so divine—DEMANDS my heart, my life, my all!**”

We are a **GRACE-DRIVEN church for a GRACE-NEEDING world.**

We must never forget that.

Our THEME VERSE is 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 where Paul writes, “***For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him Who died for them and was raised again.***” Let's say it together.

Okay, what is Grace compelling us to do in the coming year?

To help you remember the answers to this question, I've organized everything according to our GRACE acronym.

I've even printed them in the bulletin and I want you to put it in your Bibles or on your refrigerators so

you can easily find it and SEE where we are headed this year.

Take your copy now and follow along with me.

- 1. First, this year God’s amazing grace is driving us to continue to strive to GROW in the love of the Christ—which as you know is another word for DISCIPLESHIP.**

You see, understanding what Jesus did for us, inspires us to want to learn to be more and more like Him and the way we teach ourselves to do this is by studying His written Word.

As David reminds us in Psalm 119:9 ***“How shall a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word.”***

And as Paul says in 2nd Timothy 3:16, ***“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”***

I believe that the success of our church stems from how well we do this first task. I mean, the more each of us grow as disciples of Jesus—the more mature and empowered we will become—the greater things we will be able to do for the Kingdom of God.

Now, the good news is wonderful things are already happening when it comes to discipleship at PCN.

Three years ago we did the Purpose Driven Life campaign and it was a great success.

We’re still talking about all the things God taught us during those special 40 days.

And— Christian Education attendance is up across the board.

Speaking of Small Groups—this new ministry that came out of the 40 days has been growing. In our last emphasis on the Holy Spirit we averaged over 200 people in our Small Group ministry.

Our Ladies under the leadership of Fran Johnson are continuing to set the example for

us in studying the Bible together and having social events that are helping other women.

I have spoken to Bob Paugh to resurrect our Men’s ministry to have quarterly meetings to keep our men on the cutting edge of ministry in our local church.

Right now we have approximately 20 Small Groups that meet every week. I think we’ll see more small groups continue to start up as we continue to give direction in new studies.

Presently Drusilla and I have close to 30 people in Class 101 who will be ready for membership in the next few weeks. These will also be continuing in the track of discipleship Class 201 to 501.

So, discipleship looks good—but there are more things I believe God is calling us to do this year.

I believe God wants us to be more intentional when it comes to tracking how our people are progressing spiritually.

I mean, we need to be able to see if we are making progress in growing disciples.

Part of this comes from the need to equip our disciples how to lead and reproduce themselves in the lives of unchurched people.

Our General Supt. of the Church of the Nazarene have set a new mission statement for our denomination “To make Christlike disciples in the nations.”

That’s such a simple mission statement and yet it is so powerful. That affirms the Great Commandment that Jesus gave us as His Church.

And I wrote down a suggested Mission Statement for PCN that follows very closely to our

denominations: “To Win and make Christlike disciples in our community.”

And I know and understand there are some people who would say, but Pastor, we have to take a lot longer time to develop our Mission Statement and I would say, “No! We don’t! It’s simple, we just do what Jesus told us to do, and it certainly is easy for all of us to remember, **“To Win and Make Christlike disciples in our community.”**”

I believe God wants us to offer a bi-annual church-wide campaign similar to The Quest, where we study a book together as a church and compliment that study with daily devotions and worship services geared to the topic.

These bi-annual studies will help us as believers fulfill our mission statement to win the lost to Christ and to disciple them into His Church.

This has become such a positive event for our church family that our staff will continue to keep this in review.

Now, the problem is all these new discipleship opportunities require leadership.

We need leadership to step forward to assume these areas of responsibility.

One of the concerns I have as your pastor is the lack of recruiting people to do ministry in our church.

We need a staff person who would recognize and equip laity in the area of Spiritual gifts and recruit them into ministry of our church.

That staff person needs to coordinate and show the ministry areas that are ever present, looking for those critical people to become involved in ministry in specific areas of our church.

2. ...REACHING in the name of Christ—which is another word for EVANGELISM.

You see, as Christians here at PCN—as people who have experienced the grace of God—we know that without a personal relationship with Jesus people are separated from Him now and destined to be separated from Him for all eternity in Hell.

This knowledge compels us to do everything we can to get the Good News of Jesus Christ to more and more people so that they can have an opportunity to receive Him as Savior and Lord.

I mean our experience of God's grace leads us to say with the Apostle Paul, ***“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”*** (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Grace makes us take seriously our Lord's command to be ***“His witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the utter most parts of the earth.”*** (Acts 1:8)

Now, I think we are doing a great job when it comes to getting the gospel to the ***“utter most parts of the earth.”***

I mean we give to missions and special missions offerings; this church year we had a goal of giving \$55,000.00 to help our denomination reach lost people around the world.

We provide over \$44,000 for missionaries through World Evangelism, supporting missionaries in 152 different world areas. It's vital that all of us as members of this denomination support World Evangelism.

We're sending a Work and Witness team to work in Campenus, Brazil next October. This will be our first Work and Witness trip since I have become pastor.

Bob and Francis Collins, members of our church, and leaders in the denomination, will lead our team and the Pickerington Church of the Nazarene will team with us—and we are praying—seeking God's will for our entire team to be able to raise the monies needed to go.

So I'm asking you to help each of us to go on this mission endeavor. Drusilla and I both feel that our church will be greatly impacted because of this trip.

Pastor Derek is informing me that he is trying to get a group of teens for a Work and Witness team to go to help in the Katrina disaster relief this summer.

So—as you can see we've got a lot to be proud of when it comes to sharing the gospel beyond our “borders.”

But the truth is many of us have become comfortable with what we are as a church. In a sense there is a danger of slumber when it comes to winning the lost to Christ.

As I mentioned to you a couple Sundays ago, I must accept the responsibility to begin regular classes that will teach us and equip us on how to share the Gospel effectively with our friends, our neighbors, and those we work with who live in South West Licking County, east Franklin County and North Fairfield County.

As I see it we sit in a very strategic area to reach a great multitude of people.

If we say we care about people and don't want them to go to hell, and I do really believe that every one here this morning feels that way, then every one of us must learn how to effectively and relevantly share our faith with others before Jesus comes.

Folks, we live in one of the growing communities in Central Ohio. The Harvest field is white and ready to harvest.

And one tool that I think will help us to improve in this is RECREATION.

One of the potential evangelism tools we have already started here is **UPWARDS Sports**.

I want to appreciate Rob and Jane Erhman and the others who have been so faithful and sacrificed their time to do this great ministry.

I want to keep in front of you how very important it is for you to keep involved and committed to this Evangelism tool.

For you who have been involved in this I want to say thank you on behalf of the entire church

Let me show you again a short clip of why we're trying to do this.

Here's a CLIP OF **UPWARDS BASKETBALL**
00:00-04:28

I think you can begin to see how events like Upwards Sports will give us opportunities to share our faith with the people of our communities.

But to help you be **READY** for these opportunities I think we need further training.

You see, the sad truth is too many of us never reproduce ourselves spiritually. We don't take advantage of the divine appointments that God gives us usually because we don't know HOW.

And so this year I want us to change that—I want us to educate ourselves as to how to share our faith whenever we are given the opportunity to do so.

Right now I am praying and asking God to help me find the right person in our church who would step forward and take on the **Ministry of Outreach and Evangelism**. I really believe this person has to be a paid part-time staff person.

As a Holiness Church in this area, we must spread the Gospel of Jesus and let people know about the Power to be Free.

Another area we have started just recently is what we call **Worship Design**. Pastor Derek has brought this to the table for us.

Every Monday evening at 6 to 8 we talk about how to make the services most effective for all of us.

These Church services will be designed for you as believers to feel comfortable to invite your unsaved and unchurched friends and family to come and be ministered to, so in the future church as we have known it will not be usual for us

3. ...AFFIRM in the Body of Christ — or FELLOWSHIP.

We do have a wonderful church family don't we!

People who come to my Class 101 always comment on how friendly our church family is and I think that too is because of our understanding of Grace.

I mean people who know they have experienced the Grace of God always have a sweet fellowship because they know they are equally dependent on it.

Grace makes us gracious and humble people.

But, as I said earlier, we're doing **SMALL GROUPS** to help our Church family and fellowship grow even stronger. You see, I believe that our church will not grow any larger until more people are involved in Small Group ministry.

Every person needs friendships and fellowship, and if you don't have healthy relationships in the church, most likely you will not stay very long.

So I want to encourage you to plug into Our philosophy around here and that is you need to attend a **Worship Service** once a week, you need to be a part of a **Small Group** and you need to find out your spiritual gift mix and do a **Ministry**.

Another area I want to remind you is **Triplet Evangelism praying** that is getting together with two other people and faithfully praying for three people to come to know Christ. **Evangelism praying** will bring people to know Christ as their Savior.

I can't stress to you how very vitally important it is for our church to become a **Praying Church**.

You can do that by meeting with your prayer group before or after a worship service here at the church or you can do it in your Small Groups.

Soon I will be introducing to you a way that we can have 24 hours of prayer seven days a week here at PCN.

But we cannot diminish the tremendous importance of evangelism prayer.

Remember we have a **Prayer room** upstairs across from our Storehouse where you can go and pray with others or by your self.

I want to remind you that our **candle on the communion table** is going to be lit every time any one in our church leads someone to Christ. Whenever you know of someone who becomes a Christian believer, come up before the service and light the candle.

Future Master Plan: I don't want us to lose sight of our future building plan we have put in place. Now, this is subject to change, but as our congregation grows larger, we will need to either go to two services or build a new worship sanctuary.

I have placed these drawings in the foyer for you to take a look at these.

My goal has always been to start a Stewardship campaign for building when our church family grows to 500 to 600 people and we have significant growth in our tithing and giving.

We are probably about 100 people away from doing this.

I know that sounds a little overwhelming to some folks and a lot of money—and it will be—but I believe if we are to reach the people God has called us to reach, we need to step out by faith and be willing to follow God's guidance for His Church.

How many of you believe that if God is calling us to reach this greater South West Licking area and He wants for us to reach a multitude of people – How many of you believe God can accomplish this through our obedience and faith?

4. Caring in the Nature of Christ (Ministry)

Lawrence B. Hicks said, and I quote him: **“There is no better exercise for strengthening the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.”**

This last week Dru and I stayed at the Marriott in Kansas City, Mo. This is a 5 Star Hotel around the world.

One of the things I noticed about this hotel was how elegant it was and yet everywhere we went we were greeted by people who worked there with a smile and a Good morning or hello.

Whenever we requested anything from the front desk, they were very courteous and always followed up with a phone call to see if our needs had been met.

Derek, Dru and I listened to a man who had worked at the Marriott from age 17 to 81.

He told us he had shaken hands with 8 Presidents and a number of very important Hollywood stars. He was in the foyer greeting people at the age of 81.

What a life story.

I thought – Why can't this work in the church? Putting the customer first – it all sounds so commercial – you know, corporate and market driven.

And shouldn't we be putting God first?

You see – the way I look at it – there is no conflict here, because God is the One who told us to love and serve others, to meet their needs to the best of our abilities.

God is the One who sent Christ to die for us because He put our needs before His own.

I'm afraid that we in the Church have made excuses for too long. We say we don't have the money. People aren't interested in spiritual things.

But the bottom line is that we don't have better churches and more quality ministries because we're not will to pay the price.

We've allowed the enemy to dupe us into believing that quality doesn't count, that sincerity is the only thing that does.

Folks, I want to become a 5 Star Church. Isn't that what you would like to become here at PCN?

God deserves our best!

God deserves our faith to increase to believe that He wants more than what we have been giving in our tithes and offerings and our Faith Promise Pledges to World Evangelism.

We need to strive for excellence and care about our church property.

We need to strive for excellence and care about our programming and the way we present ourselves to our community because God deserves our best.

When we offer mediocre music, have unfriendly ushers and people, and ho-hum services, and then present ourselves as a reflection of God's love and character, we insult Him.

That's why we have begun Worship Design every Monday night because we want to do Worship the very best we can.

Church services here are not going to be usual anymore. We want people to come to church wondering what we're going to do next.

I know that makes some people uncomfortable, but it's time for us to come out of the ordinary and become extra-ordinary.

That's why our choir and music is so good here, because we want to be the best.

That's why our children's ministry must become the best.

All because it's a reflection on God's character.

5. Exalting in the Name of Christ.

Right now we have our morning Worship service and The Way on Sunday night led by Pastor Derek.

Most all of us understand what this service is all about, but let me share with you about The Way.

This service is especially designed anyone who would want a Sunday night alternative gathering.

This service is not just for young kids and college age kids, this service is for those of you who would like a Coke and some snacks, sitting around round tables while the service is going on.

We have a wonderful praise band for that service and Pastor Derek presents a message with interactive worship.

If you don't get a Sunday morning worship service because of some appointment or schedule problem, then this is the service for you.

Now, I've already mentioned several things that will affect worship in the coming year such as our willingness to start a new service if need be.

One other aspect of worship that I need to mention is **STEWARDSHIP**.

And I want to begin by telling you how proud I am of those who are so faithful to give every week their tithe, offerings and their Faith Promise.

But I want you to note that this year's budget will be a large increase over last year. I don't have the figure on that yet, but I just know if we are going to

grow, we have to see an increase in our tithing, our offerings and our World Evangelism.

So to meet it—to do all God has called us to do—to fulfill His vision for this church—we will have to increase our giving.

I've mentioned a lot of things this morning and it may be a bit overwhelming but I truly believe we can do all this as long as we rely on the power of Jesus and everyone get involved.

You see, the sad fact is the minority of the people in any church—even in awesome churches like ours do the majority of the work. I've already mentioned this when I told you that 20% do 80% of the work.

For this reason, our foyer will change in the next few weeks to show you the ministries we have and the opportunities for you to become a active part in doing service for Jesus and His church.

So, if you're part of the majority, then switch sides!

In fact I challenge those of you who aren't really involved. You're just on the bench, I challenge you to just TWO THINGS—be involved in one mission and one ministry.

Pick one ministry—Working in the nursery or leading a Small Group or assisting in one, working for the Store House, go on a mission trip, find

somewhere in the Church where you can be actively involved.

If everyone did ONE of each of these types of things, we'd have to have waiting lists for each of them!

Invitation:

Now, I can think of no better Sunday for a Christian who is looking for a church home to attend because today you have heard exactly what kind of church God is calling us to be.

If after hearing all this, you feel God leading you to join us in fulfilling this vision, then I invite you to meet me in the hospitality room right after this service.

There might be others of you attending this morning who may not be a Christian and you are seeking purpose and meaning in life.

That is only found in a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

We invite you to make that decision this morning and to share it with us. Won't you come as Jeff sing And then I also want to invite any of you who so desire to just come to the altar and pray this morning—pray and ask God how He wants you to be involved. Let's all respond right now as God leads.

