

Vision 2026 Update from June 17, 2012

Vision 2026. What is it? What does it mean? Well, according to dictionary.com it is the act or power of **anticipating** that which will, or may come to be. It is a vivid, imaginative conception **or anticipation** of what the future will look like. When I think of great leaders of vision, I think of Martin Luther King, Jr. who in August of 1963 shared his dream of equality and brotherhood to a nation divided by hate. I think of John F. Kennedy in 1962 who in response to the Soviet Union's achievement of putting the first man into space, turned around and painted a vision of being the first country to put a man on the moon. It took 7 years but Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon's surface on July 21, 1969. I think of the little-known Anna Jarvis who began in 1907 to have a national day of celebration for children of all ages to honor their mothers. Seven years of sharing that vision with others finally paid off as Mother's Day became an official day of remembrance in 1914. And on the heels of Mother's Day came the vision to also express appreciation and respect to their male counterparts—fathers. The vision to create an official Father's Day began in 1913 and didn't become a reality until 1972—59 years later!

Vision is a vivid, imaginative conception **or anticipation** of what the future will look like. At Bethel Hill, *Vision 2026* is just that—a vivid, imaginative conception or anticipation of what our church will look like in the year 2026. We must imagine, anticipate and plan for the changes that are coming—and they are coming. We all know that you can't stop change. You can fight it, you can embrace it, or you can adapt to it, but change happens all the time.

Change happens. It's how we respond to it that is the crux of *Vision 2026*. In 2008 I and many others engaged in a process of looking at what our church does, how we do it, who we are and what we want to be. This was known as the Revitalization Process. Through that intense process we identified seven strategic action arenas that we wanted to address based on our shared vision of Bethel Hill. Those areas included Undefined Roles, Overworked Leaders, Fragmented Congregation, Program needs, Spiritual Needs, Discouraged Members and Financial Needs. From that process we defined "actions" that we could begin to undertake to address our faith community needs. Some have been done, some have not been addressed. Some are high priority, some are on the backburner. Some are still prevalent in people's minds and some have been forgotten. All of this information is contained in what's referred to as the Revitalization Document which has been available to the entire congregation since 2008.

In 2011 the Church Council took a hard look at the Revitalization document and charted where progress was made and what had been "forgotten". From this stemmed Fall 2011 all-are-encouraged-to-participate Long Term Planning sessions where the Revitalization document was revisited and more visioning took place. The question in the air—what is our joint, vivid, imaginative conception **or anticipation of what our church will look like** in the year 2026? In addition to the existing seven strategic arenas outlined in the Revitalization document, the Long Term Planning group added two additional arenas—Property Utilization and Long Term Planning.

As Bob and Evelyn Whiteside shared to this congregation in March of this year, the Church Council has appointed Tom Tomlinson and Mary White as Revitalization Facilitators tasked with meeting with church committees and coordinating efforts to support the goals of the plan. They will work together towards a shared vision, **or anticipation of what Bethel Hill will look like** in 2026.

When I joined this church in the Fall of 2000, Bethel Hill was making a move to fulfill an anticipation of things to come in the future; they were in the process of buying the adjoining property—referred to as the Cox property—with the vision that in the future the Bethel Hill campus would expand. The Cox home was deemed non-functioning for the public needs of our church community, so the decision was made to rent the home out and put any proceeds from that rental into a separate account to be used only to pay off the property loan and the upkeep and maintenance of the Cox property. The rental fees we collect do not go into the general fund for the operation of this church. Within the last year, the Trustees had been asking what the long term plan for the Cox house was because they needed to make decisions regarding financial investments into the maintenance and upkeep of the property. A special meeting of the Church Council in March discussed, and passed, resolutions that the Board of Trustees maintain the Cox home in a safe,

livable condition but with no unnecessary maintenance or improvements **and** charged the newly formed Campus Development Committee to present a plan later in 2012 on how the Cox Property and Cox home fit into our church vision for the future—whether that is maintaining it as a rental property, leaving it empty, or demolishing the home in lieu of investing additional money into a temporary arrangement.

The Campus Development Committee chaired by Les Brown has met twice at this point with another meeting scheduled on June 26. They are tasked with a very BIG role to play in our church visioning—a very public role. However, as members and attendees of this church, our task is no less daunting, although it might not be played out in such a public fashion. It is our responsibility to live up to the vows we took as members to faithfully participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service that in everything God may be glorified.

So become knowledgeable—READ the Revitalization document in its current form with the addition of last Fall's Long Term Planning additions. A link to a downloadable version can be found on the home page of the church website, email me to get one in your inbox, or call me for a hard copy.

If you are on a committee, PARTICIPATE in your upcoming meetings where Tom or Mary will visit and talk about how your committee plays an essential role in fulfilling our shared vision of Bethel Hill. If you're not on a committee but want to know more, VISIT any committee or church council meeting to hear what is going on.

Take time to ENVISION what you want your church to look like—physically, spiritually, operationally--for you, your children and your grandchildren. TALK about that vision with people on the Campus Development Committee, Tom, Mary or myself.

PRAY about what is happening here at Bethel Hill. Pray for guidance in your own actions, as well as for the church committees and leaders. BE ASSURED that change is coming. It is how we respond that determines our future.

We all know that Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream—a vision. But in that same August speech he declaimed another important message: *We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.*