



St Andrews Presbyterian Church Albury **Vision Paper** from the Session March 2010

Albury Presbyterian Church has a long and treasured history of seeking first the Kingdom of God. God has revealed to us the mystery of his will- God's ultimate goal is to unite all under Christ, and he is sovereignly working to achieve this by sealing people with the Holy Spirit as they hear the word of truth, the gospel of Christ. Central to this plan of God is the redemption that was won through Christ's blood, and the preaching of that gospel to all the nations.

Albury Presbyterian Church has sought to conform to this plan of God through the prayerful proclamation of the Word of God to all people both here in our region and throughout the world.

That remains our unchanging goal, for that is God's unchanging plan until all things have reached their fulfilment.

However, it is important that we constantly examine the means by which we are seeking to reach that goal because our tactics can change. The apostle Paul stated it like this:-

"... I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1Cor. 9:22-23NIV)

Following the example of the apostle, we need to be constantly re-assessing our effectiveness in prayerfully proclaiming the gospel to as many people as possible so that they may be saved.

The Session of Albury Presbyterian Church has been conducting just this sort of reassessment through 2009. As a result, some exciting changes are set to be introduced beginning in Term 2 of 2010.

Change can be difficult. But there is no growth without change. And down through its history Albury Presbyterian Church has successfully undergone lots of gospel shaped change as by all possible means it has sought the salvation of lost people.



a) Growing followers of Jesus

The Session has adopted the phrase:- **Growing followers of Jesus**, as our new mission statement. It's a statement of what we are doing together under God and for his glory. We are growing followers of Jesus.

This growth can be described in 2 broad & related ways:-

Maturity

1) Firstly, followers of Jesus are grown in **maturity** as we speak & hear & obey the word of truth and that word bears fruit through the inward working of God's Spirit. In the words of the apostle Paul:-

"But, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:15-16 NIV)

Albury Presbyterian Church is committed to having the word of Christ dwell in us richly as we teach and admonish and encourage one another. We look to God to work in us by his Spirit to grow us in maturity so that we might serve him and others with joy and thanksgiving.

Mission

2) Secondly, new followers of Jesus are grown through **mission**. The gospel of salvation is proclaimed to unbelievers, who having heard & believed the word of truth, are sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit. We grow followers of Jesus through our own missionary activity. Jesus calls each one of us to be disciple-making disciples.

Albury Presbyterian Church is committed to the gospel of salvation being proclaimed prayerfully, humbly & lovingly to our community and to our world.

Growing followers of Jesus is the mission statement that you'll begin to see in our bulletins, on our web page, on our signs etc. because it's what we are seeking to do under God's kind sovereign hand.

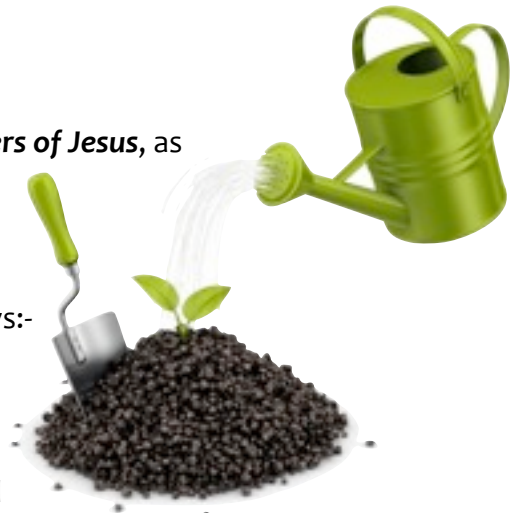
An important step in growing followers of Jesus is to grow our 3 services into 3 churches.

b) 3 services grown into 3 churches

The Session has been communicating its desire to grow our 3 services into 3 churches for some months now. In 2004 the one morning service became 2 so as to facilitate gospel growth. God has blessed that decision. To grow the current 3 services into 3 churches is in many ways the next step. It's a decision aimed at growing followers of Jesus.

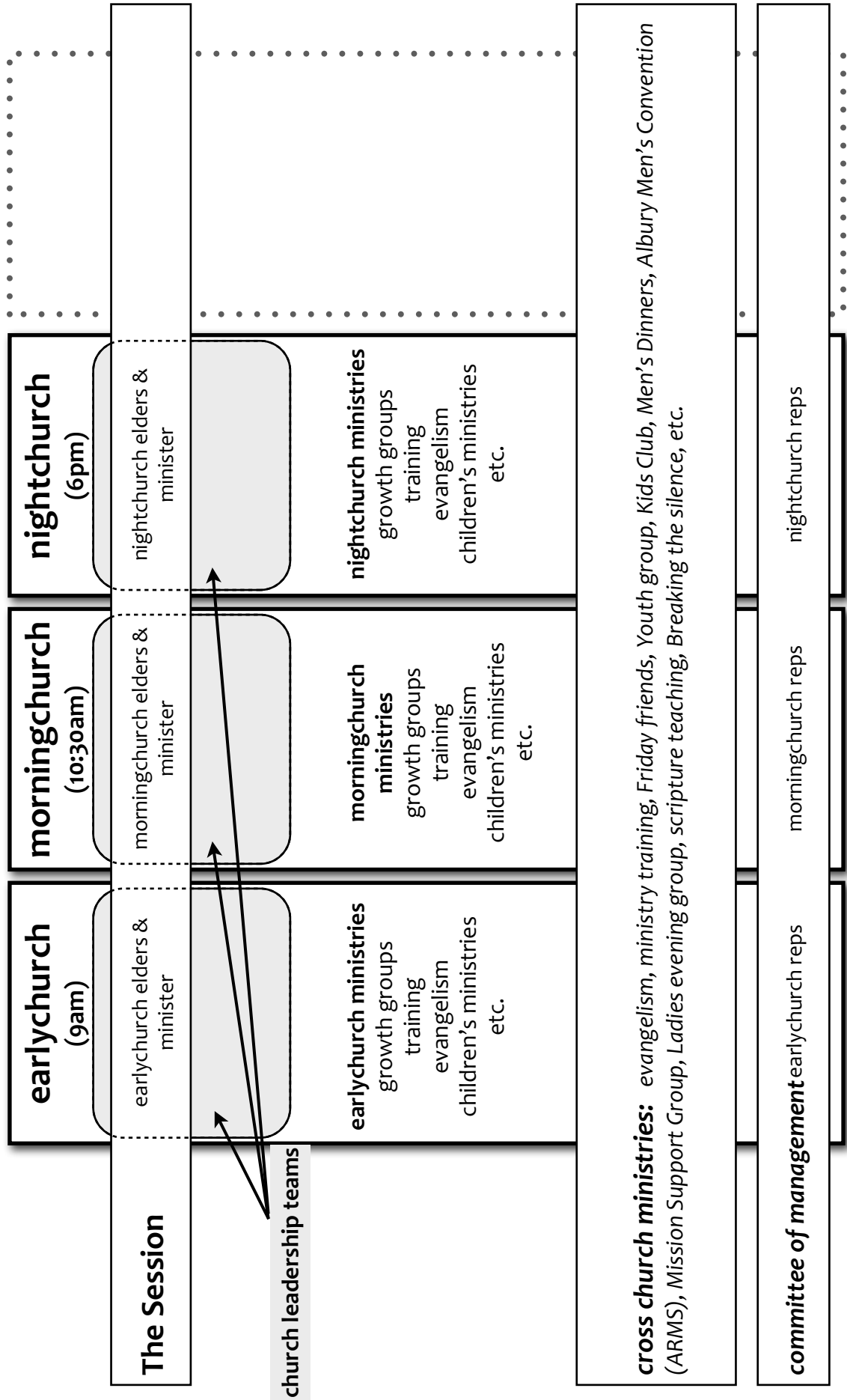
The use of the word 'church' is more than merely a name change. It signals a growing inter-dependence between the 3 churches. It signals a higher level of commitment to the family of people we gather with on Sundays.

The shape and structure of the 3 churches can be described in the following diagram:-



Albury Presbyterian Churches

growing followers of Jesus



c) Inter-dependent not independent churches

It's important to note that the relationship of the 3 churches will be one of inter-dependence and *not* independence. There will still be very important links between them.

The 3 churches will still be under the leadership of the one Session. Each church will have its own elders that collectively meet as the Session.

The physical resources and finances of the churches will still be managed by one committee of management. Each church will have its own representatives elected onto the committee each year.

Although each minister will be particularly attached to 1 church they will also minister in a variety of ways across the churches. eg. preaching, training and other cross church ministries.

Across the 3 churches there will be many ministries shared. eg. Youth group, Friday friends, Scripture teaching, Kids Club etc.

The 3 churches will be part of the growing family of Albury Presbyterian churches that have a unified mission and values.

d) 3 churches growing followers of Jesus

The Session is convinced that such a model of inter-dependent churches will allow us to be better at growing followers of Jesus.

Maturity

Smaller inter-dependent churches will enable a greater level of pastoral care to take place. People are often passed over in a bigger crowd. There is a greater level of accountability and ownership in smaller groups. The opportunities to minister to one another will be more focused in this model.

The number of ministry opportunities will grow. Each church will need to grow its own ministry teams for things like welcoming, music, leading church, visiting, Bible study leadership, technology etc. The same people doing the same jobs across all 3 services will no longer be possible. Across the 3 churches people will need to step up to serve. Within each church there will be greater training to equip each other in order to serve. This is what Christian maturity looks like:- each part of the body of Christ doing its work to build each other up.

Followers of Jesus will be grown in maturity.

Of course, the greatest measure of our maturity will be our commitment to mission because the mature disciple of Jesus is a disciple maker.

Mission

Smaller inter-dependent churches will enable us to better grow followers of Jesus through local mission. Rather than one church across 3 services seeking to reach out to our community with the



gospel of Christ, now we will have 3 churches each with its own evangelistic activities and strategies. Our smaller size will allow us to be more focused and more intentional in our missionary work.

Our inter-dependence will also mean that over time each church will develop its own slightly unique culture and feel. This will occur just because of the different people committed to each church. This variety will enable us to reach a variety of people and see them brought into the kingdom of light.

Our prayerful hope is that the Lord might choose to use the missionary work of our 3 churches to grow new followers of Jesus.

But will 3 churches be enough? Obviously not!

e) Growing big by staying small

Multiplication



The Lord has placed us on a vast mission field of some 100,000 people within this region. If we were to reach with the gospel just 1% of that mission field we would need to care for 1000 people. Clearly 3 churches will not be enough.

The strength of the inter-independent model is that it allows multiplication of churches. Having grown through the change of 3 services to 3 churches and having established that structure the possibility of planting a 4th church and then subsequent churches is more straight forward.

Imagine for a moment the family of Albury Presbyterian churches made up of 20 churches gathering in all different places and times throughout the city growing followers of Jesus through the prayerful preaching and teaching of God's word to one another. That's the vision that excites the Session. That's a vision that should excite all of us too. Remember:- God's ultimate goal is to unite all under Christ, and he is sovereignly working to achieve this by sealing people with the Holy Spirit as they hear the word of truth, the gospel of salvation.

That's why we can pray with the apostle Paul:-

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Ephesians 3.120-21 NIV)

f) So what's next?

The Session has chosen **April 25** as the starting date of our 3 churches.

• **Commit to a church**

We are encouraging people to be ready to commit to one of those churches. For many people this will mean no change.

But how does someone decide? Primarily it should be in terms of where you can best be involved in growing followers of Jesus. That is, in which church will you best be able to be involved in maturing & mission? Where are you needed to serve? Which church will best help

you reach out to your work-mates and your neighbours? What are your relational connections and how will they best be put use for the Kingdom of God?

If you currently attend more than one service you might be wondering what to do with the extra time on Sundays. It might be that that time can be used to minister to members of your church in hospitality and visiting. It might be that you can use that time to intentionally invest in your friendships with unbelievers. It might be that you could use that time to serve in a ministry in one of the other churches. eg. a nightchurch member might choose to serve in the earlychurch children's ministry.

These are things we must be praying about. Talk about it to each other, to David and Paul and to the elders. This whole process is aimed at growing God's church in this region for his glory. How can I help do this? Which church can I & my family best serve God in?

- **Gradual change**

All the changes are not going to happen on the 25th April. It will take time. There will be a transition time in which these changes take hold. As mission fields and ministries open up changes will continue to occur. The Session will be continuing to work out details & monitor progress. There are more decisions to be made beyond April 25 as the services grow into 3 churches. Session will need your help in this. Gracious communication is a very important part of this whole process.

- **Growth groups**

Meeting with others around the Bible is a primary way in which followers of Jesus are grown. So much so that the Session would like to call our Bible study groups growth groups. Our growth groups are a central ministry within our church. Eventually, the majority of our growth groups will be church specific. However, current growth groups won't be asked to split or end this year as we transition into 3 churches.

- **The difficult excitement of growth**

Change is both exciting & difficult. But growth always requires change. Through all of the proposed changes we must look to the Lord to help us and guide us as we seek first his kingdom and his glory.

The Session members are very keen to be talking these things through with you and helping you. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us. Please continue to pray.



“It was Christ who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph 4.11–13 NIV)