

Otter Creek Church *Vision 2029*

As Proverbs 29:18 teaches, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” The *Vision 2029* document below articulates how Otter Creek Church of Christ intends to embody the good news of Jesus’ kingdom to Nashville as we move towards 2029, our church’s 100th anniversary. This vision provides a “high-altitude” perspective on the congregational goals that the OC leadership will pursue and principles it will follow in matters of theology, ethos, and ministry. The OC elders enthusiastically support this vision for our next decade together.

THE 2029 MISSION STATEMENT

“Otter Creek Church is a family growing to be like Jesus.”

OTTER CREEK CHURCH CORE BELIEFS

The elders affirm our “core beliefs” as a guide for future kingdom work. These have been and will continue to be our core theological convictions:

There is only one God. God is not limited in any way by creation or our ideas about God. God rules over all creation in love, justice, and wisdom. (Genesis 1:1-31)

Everything that exists was designed and created by God to be cared for and enjoyed. God has a plan for what He has created and will accomplish God's purposes in the end. (Psalm 8:1-9)

Humans are created in the image of God so that we can have a personal and communal relationship with God. This image gives dignity and enables us to love. It also sets us above and makes us responsible for the non-human creation. (Genesis 1: 26-31)

The history of sin, death, evil, suffering and pain began by rebellion against God and can only be undone by the justice of God. (Romans 1:16-32) Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are the primary means by which God deals with sin, evil, death, suffering, and pain.

God has communicated clearly through creation, through Jesus Christ, and through the Bible. The Bible is our authoritative standard for all matters of faith and life as it clearly points us to the mystery and power of Jesus. (Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1; 1-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Though God is one, God is presented in three persons (Father, Son and Spirit)—the Trinity. As “Father,” God reigns on high, pursues righteous purposes, and will ultimately act as gracious judge of all creation. (Luke 3:21-22; Revelation 20-22)

Jesus Christ, the Son, is completely God and became a complete human being. His life revealed God to us. His death exemplifies the love of God despite the original rebellion and the evil that followed. His resurrection overcame the power of death and gave us life with God after death. Jesus is now with the Father and personally intercedes on our behalf. (John 1:1-18; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

The Holy Spirit is completely God and does the work of the Father and Son. The Spirit teaches, gives gifts, and transforms us into God’s image. The Spirit empowers us to accomplish the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. (John 14-16; Romans 8:18-39)

Salvation is by God’s grace, through Christ’s cross and resurrection, and a result of the Spirit’s active work. It is received through faith. It is sealed in confession and baptism. It is

demonstrated in a life apprenticed to the lordship of Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-11; Mark 10:35-45)

There is one Church. She is the community of people who have trusted in Jesus to make them right with God and to send the Holy Spirit to make them more like God. The church is a “commissioned people,” serving God to accomplish God's purposes in this world.(1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 4:2-6). Therefore we believe in the Great commission (Matthew 28:16-20).

God has given the church special ways in which we can draw close to God personally and enjoy God's blessings. These include baptism, prayer, worship, preaching, sharing the Gospel, Communion, Bible study, serving the poor and vulnerable, spiritual gifts, fasting, and relationships. (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Jesus will return to finally overthrow evil and death forever and to set up a new heaven and a new earth where we can be with Jesus forever. God will rule over everything. (Matthew 19:28-30; Romans 8:22-24; Revelation 21-22)

OTTER CREEK CHURCH AND THE BIBLE:

We affirm the Bible to be inspired, authoritative, and trustworthy. (Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

The Bible is the God-breathed historical, revelatory, and true story of God at work in the world. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Bible was written by people spanning many different regions, and three different languages. It is a document full of narrative, poetry, proverb, letter, apocalyptic prophecy, and song.

In short, we revere sacred scripture *because Jesus did* and we want to revere scripture the *way* Jesus did.

We believe the Bible is **inspired**. We believe that the Bible was never meant to be worshiped for its own sake but rather, it is revered for its ability to *bring people closer* to the mystery of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

We believe the Bible is **authoritative**. It has provided an ethical framework for God's people across the millennia. It enables them to see all of God's creation as the canvas on which God desires to paint God's extravagant grace.

Finally, we believe the Bible is **trustworthy**. Its powerful content continues to spark our desire to see, know, and live the heart of God in *all seasons* of life.

OTTER CREEK CHURCH CORE VALUES

In light of our “core beliefs” . . . we are convicted that this vision for 2029 requires us to grow, even in areas we hold dear and have historically been strong, including:

Hospitality. We are determined to love all people, not just those we already know but those we have not yet met; not just those with whom we are comfortable, but also those with whom we are not yet comfortable.

Creativity. We strive to live and work creatively: in worship, in preaching, in teaching, in caring for each other, serving the vulnerable and poor in our city. We pledge to focus our skills on being creative about new ways to reach people who don't know Jesus.

Authenticity. We are dedicated to truthfully acknowledging our own sins and sincerely confessing them to one another. We are committed to being honest with ourselves so that we can be honest with others. We are devoted to genuine compassion, not self-righteous criticism.

Thoughtful service. We value serious thinking in how we worship publicly and privately; in how we study, interpret, and teach scripture; and in how we shape our lives into images of Christ's by serving others.

Entrepreneurship. We have a rich history in starting new ministries. We will leverage our past successes to launch bold new initiatives that will help people and create opportunities for us to introduce them to Jesus. We will be known as risk takers.

Unity In the Midst of Diversity. We value diverse opinions about the Bible and encourage civility when we disagree about the meaning of scripture. We will build on our theological diversity and pursue ways for our church family and our leadership to grow in ethnic, economic, racial, and gender diversity for the sake of being able to relate to all who seek Jesus. Our vision says we are a church family that seeks relationship with everyone in our community.

Intentional Evangelism. We will be intentional about connecting with non-believers concerning our passion for Jesus. We will be creative in this endeavor as we teach, live, and demonstrate the power of Jesus in an increasingly secular American context. And we will celebrate when non-believers become Jesus people. Our past evangelism efforts have lacked intentionality. We desire to change this.

The Otter Creek Church seeks God's will through the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of Jesus. With the Spirit's help, we have a vision for who we are and who we want to become.

WHO WE ARE CURRENTLY

We have a beautiful history of loving and serving children and their families.

We are a large, theologically diverse family of believers. Our open-mindedness and tolerance allows us to differ on many things while sharing core beliefs about Jesus.

We love to wrestle with the Bible. We are studious as well as intellectually curious.

We value our church community tremendously. This is an amazing blessing. It also creates a challenge, at times, to fully engage and minister to people outside our church community who need Jesus.

Our church values Biblical scholarship, creativity, humor, and authenticity.

WHAT WE DO CURRENTLY:

We study and discuss the Bible and cultural issues in relationship with the Bible.

We give financial support to our local church and international missions.

We volunteer time to support outreach efforts, often outside our local community.

We initiate and launch a variety of ministries.

We love to worship and pray together on Sunday mornings.

We are a church that places emphasis and provides resources for strengthening marriages.

WHO WE WANT TO BE IN THE FUTURE:

We will be known as people who not only know the Bible but who also live holy lives based on what Scripture teaches.

We will be a church family that loves people both locally and globally.

We will be a church that places emphasis and provides resources for strengthening marriages.

OTTER CREEK CHURCH VISION 2029

We will continue to be a church that values children, families, and marriage. Additionally, we will be more intentional about how we love and care for people of all ages, especially singles (non-married) and senior citizens.

We will be a welcoming church that loves everyone regardless of who they are or who they have been. We will be known as a safe place for broken people.

We will continue to embrace Sunday morning worship as an opportunity to praise God while being intentional about including our friends and neighbors who don't know Jesus as Lord.

We will be deliberate about applying our academic knowledge in practical ways that matter to the lost and vulnerable people of our community.

We, like Jesus, will counter-culturally love our neighbors rather than love being right (Mark 3:1-6).

We will become more hospitable to all people, not for the sake of political correctness, but in the spirit of being *all things to all people* to further the kingdom of God.

We will be unafraid to brave risks in new ventures.

We will model innovation and scalability as we consider new ministry efforts.

We will hold each other accountable for our actions.

We will hold on to our best characteristics, while growing in these new areas.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

We want to leverage our unique creativity and our love for Jesus to solve problems that our world cannot solve.

We want to embrace a "10 talent mindset" which continually asks: "What can Otter Creek do at scale that individuals cannot do alone?"

We want to move beyond providing symptomatic relief for those who struggle and instead provide life-changing solutions for the causes behind their struggles.

We want to rise above partisan politics for the glory of the kingdom of God.

We want to consistently bear witness to the power of the gospel at work in a vibrant community of faith. We want to find practical ways to apply our knowledge of the Bible.

As a means to become a more inclusive and diverse community of believers, we want to consider gender and race along with giftedness in hiring decisions for ministers and staff.

We want to seek ways to engage the whole church in “hands on” ministry opportunities in order to break down walls between “us and them” and provide opportunities for members to share their vocational gifts. In doing so, we will create more kingdom disciples instead of religious consumers.

We want to become a “staging area” to serve our Brentwood community.

We want to ensure that OC camp remains a vital part of the spiritual formation experience of our students.

We want to set high expectations for committed involvement and hold each other accountable when we succeed or fall short.

We want to be clear about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. We want to equip members with practical examples about how to become and make disciples that go beyond simply inviting people to worship services.

We want to provide clear expectations of what it means to be a part of the Otter Creek church.

Seeking the Spirit’s leading, we want to openly study and discuss the gifting of men and women with unity and wisdom ensuring all members are fully utilizing their gifts and skills as revealed by the Holy Spirit.

We want to discern what it means to be a safe and nurturing church for all people regardless of their sexual orientation.

As we grow, we desire to embrace those people who join the OC community and provide opportunities for them to worship, serve, and grow into the likeness of Christ. Our vision is to become a more dynamic and growing body, including the possibility of church planting, multi-site engagement, and creation of digital communities. We expect to grow in multiple facets.

The elders commit to authentic leadership. We will be prayerful, visible, committed, confessional, and accountable. We will value and relate to the entire body of believers. We will not be managers; we will be leaders.

OTTER CREEK CHURCH PRIORITIES AND DIRECTION

Continued Support: We will continue to support all current effective ministry efforts.

Outward focus: We should reach outside our walls and serve people who do not know Jesus or are not part of a local Christian faith community.

Community Partners: As we serve lost and vulnerable people, both locally and globally, we will look for existing effective partners who might help us in this work.

Kingdom Incubator: Otter Creek's collective talents obligate us to serve the kingdom in special ways. Specifically, we believe we are uniquely positioned to help encourage, fund, and scale ministries. In short, OC should be an incubator of kingdom ideas, witnessing these ideas grow in the U.S. and around the world.

Development Efforts: Our desire is that we don't simply pursue relief efforts but that we also pursue development ministries (e.g. Made in the Streets in Nairobi). We want to address the root causes not merely the symptoms. The following areas should be given strong consideration for what we do with our financial resources now that our debt has been eliminated. (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37).

- Shelter and affordable housing shortage
- Immigrants and refugees in the Greater Nashville area
- At-risk families who are vulnerable because of a lack of money, education, housing, and affordable health care.
- The aging population of Williamson Co. and their caregivers
- Victims of addiction
- Victims of sex-trafficking

The Otter Creek Church seeks God's will through the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of Jesus. With the Spirit's help, we have a vision for who we are and who we want to become. It is our fervent prayer that God would find us faithful in living out God's mission for our time and place.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)