

NORTH ROCKS COMMUNITY CHURCH

Vision 2012

A NARRATIVE



“Lots of changes but some things never change”

Over the past decade, North Rocks Community Church has gone through some big changes. We have seen huge changes in our church property – not only increasing the property size but also seeing new additions and renovations to assist our mission and ministry. We have seen changes in our leadership structure and church council structure. We have seen new ideas and initiatives within our worship and church programs and we have seen new people come and make NRCC their spiritual home. It has been a time of significant change and yet ... some things never change.

When it comes to our church’s passions and focus areas – these have not changed in 60 years. Our church has always had a strong emphasis on being a place where families feel welcome and children are catered for and nurtured in their faith. Our church has always had a heart for mission – reaching out and sharing the love of Jesus to our local community and to the ends of the earth through our missionaries. Our church has always had a passion for social justice. Our church has always encouraged participation of all people in its life and ministry. Our church has always encouraged creativity and interaction in our worship services. Our church has always believed in the power of prayer. These things are so ingrained in who our church is that it is like they are written in our DNA. These things will never change.

When it comes to our 2012 Vision ... we acknowledge the continuing strong emphasis on families, children & youth, mission, social justice, participation, creative worship and prayer, and at the same time discern what expression or focus our church’s ministry and mission might take this year.

“2011 – An Unexpected Road”

Last year we discerned that God was encouraging us to focus on growth – growth in our relationship with Jesus, growth in our understanding of faith and the bible and growth in our community. Vision Sunday last year proposed some great ideas to help us to grow – an emphasis on re-energising the bible study groups, providing opportunities to explore personal growth (such as the discovery sessions) and continuing our focus on pastoral care to help growth in our sense of community.

However, due to some tragic events our church found itself on an unexpected road – one full of grief and sadness, one where we struggled with faith questions and one which we learnt that we could only walk with the help of the people around us. Our Vision hoped that we would grow in 2011. Yes, we grew but not in the way we had planned.

It does raise the question, “What about all the plans we had for 2011 which we didn’t get to – are they still relevant?” I believe that they are. In my discerning I felt that God was affirming that goals and focus of our 2011 Vision should remain in 2012 ... but maybe with a change in how we approach them. Keep the “what” but a change in the “how”.

“2012 Vision ... A season for fruit”

As we prepare this vision we spend a great deal of time in prayerful discernment. One of the pictures that kept forming in my mind was that of a gardener working with a fruit tree. (A Biblical image found in John 15 and Luke 13). Using this image we could see last year as a time of being tended to by the gardener and now I sense that the preparation has been done so that we can see not only more growth but have a season of fruit – a season where we can see goals being achieved. This year’s Vision is not just about what God wants us to focus on but on the details of how we can make that happen.

Our Church’s Vision for many years has been “Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities” – this will remain as God continues to desire to work within people to transform their lives and situations and work through people to transform the communities around them. Our Vision focus for 2011 was growth – growth in understanding, growth in relationship and growth in community. We believe that God is calling us to continue this focus and return to some of the good ideas that we had planned but did not eventuate.

This year, we will add to our Vision focus four ideas or phrases based on four key words which will help us move this vision from words to reality; that will build upon the growth from last year and lead us to a season of fruit. These four words are community, participation, passion and prayer.

**Embracing
Community**
**Encouraging
Participation**
**Igniting
Passion**
**Submitting in
Prayer**

“Embracing Community”

Community is part of who we are, part of our DNA. We value our sense of community within our congregations and we understand that we are here to serve the local community. The idea of community is so important to us that we have included it in our name – North Rocks Community Church. We believe that God is calling us this year to embrace (or re-embrace) the idea of community, to allow ourselves to be caught up in the spirit of community, to find a sense of belonging to the community and to appreciate the broader communities that we are part of.

We are planning to help people embrace community this year by:

- ⇒ **Re-energising the bible study groups.** Last year we had a plan in place to encourage, resource and build up our bible study / support groups within the church. This goal was partly achieved but will be followed through more this year – including the starting of two new bible study groups this term.
- ⇒ **Be a caring community.** Last year showed just how important it can be to have caring people around you. We plan to build upon the good initiatives of the pastoral care team
- ⇒ **Opportunities for people to connect and build relationships with others in our church community.** This year we will look to finding more ways to help people meet together, to share around common interests and get to know each other in a richer and deeper way.

“Encouraging Participation”

At the end of last year, Church Council spent a deal of time exploring the world-wide trend of diminishing volunteer hours being given to churches and community groups. This year we are looking at creative ways of maintaining our high quality and diverse ministry and mission in a way which does not over burden people. However, as a church we want to affirm that participation in ministry and mission is not only good for the church, but it is good for the person involved.

Being part of God's work brings fulfilment, joy, purpose and above all, it brings faith growth. Whilst we never want to guilt people into serving, as a church we do want to encourage participation for the growth that it brings.

We are planning to encourage participation through:

- ⇒ Helping people to discern their gifts and passions and providing good communication of ministry and service opportunities
- ⇒ Creative uses of rostering, ministry blocks and other tools to allow people to serve when they are able to and serve in a way which does not bring burn out or takes away the joy of participating.
- ⇒ Providing training and encouragement

“Igniting Passion”

The best way to encourage participation is to tap into people's passions. God has created us as passionate people and we as a church want people to express that passion. Passion can be expressed in different ways – passionate for things that are good or Godly or a “holy discontent” – a passion to change things which are wrong or unjust. If we are going to see fruit this year, we need to allow space for people to be passionate.

We are planning to ignite passion through:

- ⇒ Facilitating connections between people with similar passions so that they can discern how God is wanting them to express their passion within the church
- ⇒ Harnessing the passion for Social Justice and overseas mission within the church and directing that to bring change
- ⇒ Encouraging passion and creativity in worship

“Submitting in Prayer”

Participating and Passion are only fruitful when it is underpinned with prayer – an understanding that all we do is done in the name of Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We understand that the only way we can “love justice and show mercy” is to “humbly walk with our God”. We wish to encourage a culture of prayer where we regularly connect with God in whatever form of prayer works for us and allow God to fill our “inner well” so that we may give to others.

We are planning to help us all submit in prayer through:

- ⇒ Bringing back the “Discovery Sessions” where we show practical tools on how to connect with God in a variety of ways
- ⇒ Building into the life of our church creative ways to encourage this culture of prayer so that we never forget that God is not only the reason why we serve, but provides the gifts and power in which we serve in
- ⇒ Creation of a physical prayer space on the church property to encourage prayer

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A SUMMARY



- God calls us to join in as he “Transforms Lives and Transforms Communities.”
- We acknowledge the continuing strong emphasis on families, children & youth, mission, social justice, participation, creative worship and prayer – things that are built into our church’s DNA and will never change
- We affirm the groundwork done in the 2011 Vision and wish to continue to encourage growth – growth in understanding, growth in relationship and growth in community
- We see 2012 as a year of building on the growth of last year and seeing some goals come to fruition.

Four ideas which will help us this year:

- ⇒ **Embracing Community.** Allowing ourselves to be caught up in the spirit of community, to find a sense of belonging to the community and to appreciate the broader communities that we are part of.
- ⇒ **Encouraging Participation.** Participating in the ministry and mission is not only helpful for the church but is helpful for our own spiritual growth and fulfilment.
- ⇒ **Igniting Passion.** God has created us as passionate people and we as a church want people to express that passion within the life of the church and beyond.
- ⇒ **Submitting in Prayer.** Encourage a culture of different forms of prayer / connecting with God so that we never forget that God is not only the reason why we worship, love and serve, but provides the gifts and power for us to do this

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