

Willow State of the Church Address

Jan 15, 2006

I. Introduction (Doug Wright):

- Recasting of our vision – Time of reflection and revelation
- Praise and celebration of what God has done in our church and community this past year – how He has poured out His Spirit and where He is leading.
- A time to see where has God moved and where is He leading?
- Important to communicate in church service because there is more to us at Willow than what happens in Sunday morning service –
- We are a body of Christ that God wants to use and so it is important that we recast and refocus.
- Prov13:17– Reliable messengers
- God wants us to progress so it is important to keep our vision before us so that we can accomplish it.
- Nehemiah 4 – leads Israelites to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.
- Fatigue, discouragement, lost focus. Work stopped. Nehemiah stepped in to help them refocus and know that God was there and they finished in 52 days. A miracle of God
- Neh 6:16. Enemies were afraid because they realized that the work was done with the help of God
- God is still doing miracles. He wants to use Willow to fulfill his purposes.
- How does God want to use you?

II. Past – What we've seen the Lord do (Brad Crim):

- Great Adventure – beautiful building
- Vision – Building Christ centered homes – touches from here around the earth
- Structure – formed Leadership Team and Community Teams– covenant to guide us, united, seeking God, looking for the direction He wants to go, moving in that direction
- We have a big God – Don't think small.
- Budget process went well – Finance Committee and Community teams worked together to plan; much passion behind it – Exciting to see.

- Communication – going both ways – we need your feedback
- Working toward salvation of many
- Hallelujah festival
- Building – properties committees working well together
- Missions – more lay people are engaged – many are talented and gifted and working together to accomplish the great commission.
- Pastor with a vision and passion for uniting church bodies of the community –teaching people to fish; River of Hope – Brazoria Co. Development Partnership.
- God speaks to us and many times we hesitate. Let’s listen and follow Him – don’t doubt God.

III. Future – Where we believe the Lord is taking us (Cliff Moore):

1. Continue with the structure – Brad shared examples of how the team structure bore fruit in 2005 and in 2006 we will use the structure to work through some short term and long term decisions to enable Willow to fulfill our mission

a. Staffing

i. Paid Children’s minister – Children’s ministry has been the biggest door for evangelism and growth in our congregation; consider the recent number of baptisms; Henry Blackaby – see where God is working and join him in his work.

ii. Worship Team – plan is to continue using the lay team approach in lieu of a paid Worship Minister; utilize the giftings and talents of the members of congregation; looking to arrange for some additional training for WT’s to continue their growth

iii. No Church Administrator – not planning to hire an additional church administrator; the responsibilities of the administrator role have been distributed between the paid office staff and lay members; Robin and Linda picked up additional responsibilities; Cecil Williams and Properties Committee taking responsibility for the maintaining and enhancing the facilities

iv. This lay staff approach is not a stop gap, it is the direction we desire to pursue; to continue growing lay

participation and using the giftings and talents of our congregation to grow us.

v. However, we are not pushing forward in this direction without keeping our eyes open to see how it is working; as we proceed we will evaluate how this approach is working out and make adjustments; growth may provide us with both the need for additional staff and the ability to fill that need

b. Properties

i. Tremendous progress in last 12 months shoring up issues with the facility and in 2006 we will continue to do so

ii. Establish a vision for completing the second floor – Properties committee has provided a great overview and several options; look forward to getting your input on this as we establish a facility vision that aligns with our Mission and God's activity here at Willow.

2. Spiritual and Relational Vitality – items above were the practical direction, but we also feel God prompting us to enhance our spiritual and relational vitality

- a. Establish value of rest – Things of life (illness, job transitions, family changes, unexpected problems) sap your internal strength. Couple that with a season of high activity (Great Adventure, new ministries, new structure) and fatigue and weariness can set in within the body. No different for Jesus. Scriptures indicate that during these times, Jesus made it a point to get away and spend time with the father; he used this time to practice solitude, simplicity and silence; people were still waiting for him to minister, but Jesus knew that in order to minister with Kingdom effectiveness his soul needed rest. Heb 4 speaks of this type of rest and Jesus offers this same rest to us in Matt 11:28–30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." This value of rest for the soul is something that we will look to establish here at Willow. As Jesus exemplified, this type of rest isn't stepping away from or reducing ministries but rather intentionally tapping into the Father

and the Son to encounter the refreshment that is necessary to minister effectively..

- b. Promote broader ownership of Willow Purpose, Values and Philosophy of Ministry – These tenets of Willow are written in our handbooks and visible to some extent in our buildings and in our ministries. But our ultimate desire here is for each ministry to grow in the awareness and practice of these tenets so that anyone who visits Willow can quickly pick them out. So that though our congregational life they can see and feel that we value hearing from and following God, we value the restoration of individuals and freedom in worship, that we value unity, outreach and discipleship, and that we are passionate about building Christ-centered homes in the Brazosport Area. We will accomplish this internalization of Willow’s tenets through several different approaches including helping ministries to incorporate them into their decision-making, continued communication between LTs, CTs, and MTs, and more frequent church-wide celebrations.

IV. Regional Transformation (Scott McKay)

“Your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth (in southern Brazoria County) as it is in Heaven.”

Are you satisfied with the current level of God’s Kingdom in SBC? Is the current % of:

1. Poverty where it should be
2. Lost people
3. Broken homes
4. Homelessness
5. Sickness
6. Political corruption
7. Drug & alcohol abuse
8. People making a living wage
9. Miracles
10. Economic prosperity

About right Or should it be less or more based upon the category?

Imagine...

1. Schools – groups of people praying; no one is trying to prove their superiority or put others down; everyone is striving to do their best; clear standards of right & wrong; drugs, sex, alcohol, profanity don't litter conversations or fill student's weekends; you still may not like going to school, but it's not b/c the environment is so dark and the pressure is so strong.
2. Families – united, husbands loving their wives like Christ loved the church, divorce seldom happens, no abuse, encouragement & joy, debt is a thing of the past, moms can stay home if they want,
3. Economics – workers are making a living wage, employers treat employees fairly, work force is educated, new discoveries and business flourish, poverty is diminishing; economic growth; environment is protected
4. Political Structures – bureaucracy and special interest groups don't control the flow of resources to those in need or projects, people serving do so with right motives, God fearing people are directing the affairs of the city, county, state and nation; poor have a voice; equity in the courtroom; righteousness fills the legislature; unjust laws are overturned
5. Church – life giving flow, sin is eradicated, Satan is eliminated & Jesus is elevated; unity & joy; signs & wonders; Jesus is real; sins are confessed, curses are broken & people are delivered; People don't see RCC, Bapt or Pent, but JS, Js, Js

Don't just imagine it, but believe because it is happening today...!!!

It's happening in Fiji.

The thing I want to see God do more than anything else is to transform SBC (Southern Brazoria County)!!! The great news is that God wants to do it a lot more than I do

Isa.32.14 – 20

REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION IS GOD SIZED

God has called Willow, as well as other churches and individuals, to be a part of advancing this effort. One church or individual can't, but a group of believers of every denominational stripe can work at this together

Examples of Regional Transformation in Scripture:

Kingdom of Israel under Solomon (1 Kings 4.24f – 10.14–29) – Under David, Isr was in a state of war (the enemies of God were being destroyed); under Solomon, Isr was in a state of peace...God was enthroned; Solomon was faithful; people were obedient. There was economic prosperity, spiritual power, unity among the people, expansion of the kingdom, new discoveries & peace.

I believe the Kingdom of Isr during this phase in its history is a prototype of when the will of God is being done on earth (also the kingdom of God may mean violence).

Kingdom of Israel under Asa (2 Chron.14 – 15; esp. 14.2–6) – There was a time of peace b/c they sought God. People turned from personal & societal sin (consider our sins against slaves, Native Americans & abortion); corrupt political structures changed; godly leaders sought the Lord; expansion, prosperity, signs & wonders during a war...note the result in 15.9, 15

Same during Jehoshaphat (2 Chron.20) & Hezekiah (2 Chron 29)

NT Examples: Early church – Acts 4.32–35; 5.12–16; 9.31
 Ephesus – Acts 19

Regional Transformation doesn't mean: complete change, no conflict, and everyone is on board, but that the culture is beginning to look more like the KOG.

God is doing the same here...Ed Denman's appointment as the new district court judge...potential economic boost...social justice initiatives (God's heart for the poor ...this is huge)...

Summary of 2006 Key Goals – Our 4 Main Goals for this year

1. Facilities & staffing – prioritization of facility & staffing needs
2. Broader Congregational ownership
 - a. Making values visible, that is, our values become more a part of the church life. They aren't just written out but lived out.

- b. Continue with structure – Leadership Team & Community Teams continue to increase their trust for one another.
 - c. Communication – intentionally make sure that there is a dialogue about the church’s current direction, and development.
 - d. Celebrations – we need opportunities to Reflect over what God has done through our congregation through the past year. This will be done through ABF’s on Friday or other night with a Meal, testimonies, games at end (optional) “Feeding Friendzee” grouping/seating to mix people up.
3. Spiritual/Relational vitality
- a. Sabbath Rest Value – gather a team together to begin researching the concept of Sabbath in the NT and early church history. This was initiated because of the level of stress and busy-ness experience.
4. Community Transformation
- a. Social Justice activities – River of Hope (joint benevolent ministries to better meet the needs of the poor) & Brazoria County Development Partnership (building low income housing). These are moving forward.
 - b. Prayer – church & area wide for transformation of our area. Prayer Community Team is handling this.