



## A VISION FOR PGCC & UTOWN

### OUR STORY

Since the time UTown was planted out of PGCC on Pentecost Sunday of 2005, the Elders of both congregations have continued to meet together to ask the question: *are we called to remain together?* We believe the answer from the Spirit has been a resounding 'Yes'. God has called us to remain together, and more than that, to serve together in close partnership, as one church of two congregations.

The question that naturally follows from this is *why? For what purpose?*

The *why* goes back to at least the AGM in 2004, when the idea of planting a church at UBC was first presented to the PGCC membership. Even then, the mandate was not simply to 'send out'

the UBC plant, rather it was for PGCC to remain alongside to help and support this new church in order to see it succeed and grow to maturity. However, not long after what became UTown was planted, the Elders also began to sense that God had a bigger purpose for us than one church plant at UBC. A dream emerged that both congregations would continue to partner together in mission, in particular, to plant more congregations across the city.

As we know, the ensuing years have been characterised by a lot of change, especially for PGCC. Meanwhile, UTown has been mostly focussed on establishing and growing the church to a place of sustainability and fruitfulness. This has meant we (PGCC & UTown) have not been able to fully explore this larger vision of relationship and mission together. That is, until

now. As we enter a time of pastoral transition, and life-as-usual for our congregations changes yet again, the Elders believe God has given us a window of opportunity to wholeheartedly pursue the vision, and make the necessary changes to see this happen.

With that in mind, this vision (outlined in detail below) was presented at our most recent AGM, along with some plans for how we intend to pursue this together. The immediate changes are as follows:

Firstly, Tim Horman has been appointed by the Elders as the interim lead Pastor of PGCC (while remaining the lead Pastor for UTown), and is primarily tasked to work with the Elders to identify and establish a new (lay) Leadership Team for PGCC. Secondly, for three months from May until the end of the July (we are calling this the 'transition phase'), UTown and PGCC will join together on Sundays at the Kits location, to build unity, dream, pray, worship, learn, and fellowship together. We will use this time to communicate the vision, build relationship, and pray for God's will to take root among us. Meanwhile, the combined Eldership of both congregations will

Most importantly, we are not pursuing this relationship simply because we think it will make life easier. No, we believe this is an *apostolic calling* - something given to us by God, in order to equip and empower one another for mission, both locally and city-wide. If it were not for this, we could envision many other ways for us to 'be friends' and work together from time to time, but God has called us to something more intentional than that.

That is the *why*. In a nutshell: because this is God's vision for us! The next question is *how*? How will we do this? How will we work together to reach the city? To help explain this we have adopted the language of *Parish*, namely, a family of churches working together in a specific geographical region, which in our case is the City of Vancouver: *Vancouver is our Parish*.

## CITY PARISH

Although 'Parish' may be a term we aren't particularly familiar with, it is a helpful way of trying to describe what we are seeing for our collective future, by way of analogy. With that in



work together to address many of the unanswered questions we all have regarding what the pursuit of this vision means for our future. One important element of that will be to identify and call a new pastor for PGCC.

mind, and after a great deal of prayer, the Elders see a vision of **a family of vibrant Spirit-filled neighbourhood churches partnering together for the common good and renewal of the city**. We are a family of churches called together for

*mission, and we want to see the God who makes all things new, transform and renew Vancouver for the glory of His name!*



We recognise that the call to reach the city is something no local church can hope to accomplish on its own - a single local church can never be 'all things to all people'. Instead, a local church, should take missional responsibility for its own community, while also remembering that the purposes of God in the city are bigger and more diverse than any one immediate neighbourhood.

In that spirit, a family of neighbourhood churches who know and love one another, and who serve in an intentional relationship as one church of many congregations, by sharing leadership, resources, ministry, staff, finances, and fellowship, can impact the city in a way that a single local church could not. By leveraging the resources God has given to each local church and making them available to all, we transcend the limitations of the local church and enable our mission together to grow in many creative and diverse ways that would not otherwise be possible.

One major difference between this model and the Catholic/Anglican Parish model, is, of course, the absence of a Bishop. We are replacing that strict hierarchical structure with a *relational one*, centered around an *Apostolic Leadership Team*, while also attempting to retain the best of the 'old' Parish model in terms of the interdependence between local congregations across a regional area.

The Apostolic Team will be a representative group consisting of a senior leader, plus the Pastors of each neighbourhood church, plus other appointed leaders - based on the Ephesians 4 vision of church governance [Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher]. The Team will meet frequently to seek God, listen to the leading of the Spirit for the church, to encourage and equip one other, to plan shared ministry, and to

discuss how best to implement the vision. During the current transition phase, the combined Eldership of PGCC/UTown will serve as an interim Apostolic Team, until the time is right to launch the Apostolic Team officially. This 'Parish model' also envisions a certain



degree of shared staff, serving centrally, working to support the ministry of the local congregations and the mission of the whole church. However,

each congregation will continue to have its own local Pastor, Eldership and Leadership Team, and where applicable, other local staff. Shared staff might include such things as: a family (children and youth) Pastor; admin staff (finance, office/secretarial, an executive Pastor); worship and arts Pastor etc, as necessary based on the leading of the Spirit and the needs of the church. (See Figure 1 below.) What follows is an outline of the key elements of this vision.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCHES

It is essential that we differentiate this strategy from other 'multi-congregation' approaches, by stressing that this is not intended to create a monoculture of franchised churches that will look and sound exactly the same in each neighbourhood. Instead, we want each church to have its own missional identity, and the freedom to pursue that mission in a way that seems best, as the Spirit leads.

The Elders and Leadership Team of each local church will continue to provide spiritual direction, pastoral care, and discern the missional

freedom to contextualise their ministry to the culture of the neighbourhood, as appropriate.



## SHARED LEADERSHIP

In addition to the creation of an Apostolic Leadership Team, we will continue with a single Board and shared ('single pot') finances, and although our staffing model is yet to be fully determined (we will be working this out during the May - July transition phase and beyond), it will ultimately reflect a greater degree of integration and unity in the church.

This model also envisions the role of a senior Leader, whose task will *not* be to lead the neighbourhood churches (though they may also be the Pastor of a neighbourhood church), but rather to provide leadership to the Apostolic Team and the shared mission of the combined church across the Parish.

That is (briefly) the *how*. Finally comes the *what*? What will we be doing together, specifically?

## SHARED MINISTRY

This is an area that we will address slowly, and prayerfully, during both the transitional phase and of course beyond that once the Apostolic Team is established. However, we do imagine that in addition to the ministry we already share together (Pre-Teens and Youth; support for the

purpose of the congregation. Each neighbourhood congregation will have its own worship gatherings, and each community will have



Doves and UCM, for example), there are a couple of key things we *could* add that will help build unity and mission across the church. Such as,

whole church to see and hear what God is up to among us, in order to build unity and faith around our common purpose.



regular combined worship gatherings, and a combined homegroup ministry (especially in regards to creating material, leadership training and group support).

Further down the road, other possibilities might include a marketplace ministry, family ministry, combined men's and women's ministries, worship and the arts, a prayer-ministry center, discipleship and leadership training, and citywide or global mercy and mission projects.

## COMBINED GATHERINGS

Every month or so, all the neighbourhood churches will come together for one combined worship gathering to tell the stories of God's grace at work among us. The emphasis of these gatherings will be on celebration, thanksgiving, encouragement, and testimonies of transformation. It will be an opportunity for the

## CHURCH PLANTING

Finally, to take us back to the beginning, this *what* is central to our *why*. Why has God called us together? In order to reach the city, one neighbourhood at a time. Planting churches is, of course, a core element of that vision.

## IN CONCLUSION

The 'city parish' is an apostolic, highly relational, deeply interdependent, and kingdom-focused vision of the church in Vancouver. It enables us to remain small enough for each member to be known and to involve every person in ministry, while maintaining a large kingdom vision for the renewal of the city. Our mission is both local and citywide, and our relationship together will be one of "high accountability, low control" as we support one another in serving God, so that *His Kingdom come and His will be done, in this city as it is in heaven.*



## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Over the coming weeks and months, the Eldership will be providing further opportunities for you to engage more deeply with this vision, and we definitely welcome your input! If you have any questions or comments, please share them with us. In particular, we ask you to pray and listen, and pass on anything you hear, which you believe to be from God. Our desire is for this vision to capture our imaginations and tap into the deep wells of creativity and passion that exist in all of us. We hope that this vision will inspire us to walk by faith and trust deeply in the power of God. It is a big vision, but Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, and nothing is impossible for Him.

On behalf of the Elders of PGCC and UTown,

Tim Horman

*Figure 1. A simple visual representation of our proposed model:*

