

The Lighthouse



BRITTON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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BRITTONCHURCH.COM

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

We are so excited that God has led you to Britton Christian Church and that you want to learn more about what He is doing through this congregation. This booklet was designed with you in mind. We hope and pray it will answer many of the questions you might have about who we are, the mission that God has given us as a congregation, and how you can plug-in and become a part of the ministry taking place here in this community.

It is important for us to share with you that everything that flows from our ministry as a church is based upon the light of the world, Jesus Christ. We believe that it is imperative to communicate clearly to you our absolute dependence upon Jesus Christ for all that we are and who we are as a congregation.

Nothing is more confusing than trying to relate to someone, or an organization, that is giving you mixed messages. The old saying remains true, "Say what you mean and mean what you say." The Message that God has given us to communicate to our community is too vital and important for us to send mixed messages. We must know what we are trying to say and say it with clarity and conviction.

There are many mixed messages ringing out across our land today about God, the purpose and meaning of life, Jesus, sin, salvation, suffering, and happiness. Some say that Jesus was a good teacher, but so were Buddha, Einstein, Confucius, Mohammed, and many others. Some say that the best way to God is whatever feels most natural to you and me. Some say that if you live a good enough life and try really hard then you will go to heaven. Some say, but what does God say about salvation, Jesus, our sin, forgiveness, and fulfillment for living?

Because Britton Christian Church is founded upon God's Word, we have chosen to value what God has to say about all of life, rather than what we think or feel. From our study of God's Word we have arrived at our central, foundational, and essential message. This one message is what we are called to proclaim - Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God who came to take away our sins and give us abundant life. The Message of Britton Christian Church is Jesus Christ. Paul said,

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. (1 Corinthians 1:20-25)

Every word you will read in this brief study flows from our commitment to passionately know the One who has come to give us life. We pray that your time with us at BCC will lead you into a new and exciting life seeking after God. May God richly bless you!

In his steps,
Mike Hays

THE MISSION OF BRITTON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Why am I here?

Is there any purpose in life?

What is meaningful in life?

These questions are not only being asked by many people in our society, but they are also hanging over the steeples of many churches today. Mainline Protestantism in America is dying a slow death. All of the major denominations have lost a sizable portion of their membership during the past decades. According to many church growth gurus, often churches lack clarity concerning God's purpose for their existence; and as a result, they are continuing on a downhill slide. It is my belief that this decline is directly tied to the lack of a clear understanding of God's purpose for their church.

God has never created any person without planting in them a divine purpose, a reason for their existence. Many never seek to find God's purpose for their lives; they never ask God - "How do You want to use me Lord?" But there are those who have gone before us and those among us even now who have sought God's purposes for their lives and have been given new meaning and direction. They have looked for God's will above all else and learned why they were given life. Let me give you an example.

Esther was a Jewish orphan girl raised by her uncle, Mordecai, in Persia. She replaced Queen Vashti when she refused to appear at a banquet hosted by her husband, King Ahasuerus. Esther did not reveal to anyone that she was Jewish since that would have

been two strikes against her in the King's eyes. Mordecai heard about a plot against the king's life that he reported through Esther. He was credited with saving the king. A man named Haman was made Prime Minister of Persia and plotted against Mordecai and the Jews because they would not pay homage to him. Haman convinced the king to issue a decree that all who would not bow down to him would be killed. Esther learned of the plot and sent for Mordecai. She feared for herself and her people. He challenged her with the idea,

"Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

She asked Mordecai and the Jews to fast with her while she decided whether or not to go to the king. Finally, she determined she should go, and she entered the king's presence unsummoned, even though it could have meant her death. The king granted her request, and at a banquet Esther revealed Haman's plot to destroy her and her people, the Jews. Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Mordecai was promoted, and Esther got the king to revoke Haman's decree to destroy the Jews. Esther learned that God had indeed raised her up for just such a time as this!

God's design for planting a divine purpose into each individual life also applies to churches. Jesus told Peter, **"Upon this Rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not overcome it."** Jesus is the One who plants churches. As He plants and nurtures each of them, He has a purpose for doing so.

The purpose of a church is defined by the Lord and Him alone.

In Revelation 2, Jesus addressed the church in Ephesus. He commended them for some good things they were doing, but then He warned them that He would shut them down, remove their “lampstand,” if they did not return to His mission for them. Jesus said,

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Revelation 2:2-6)

Now that we understand that God is a God of purpose, that He has written upon our hearts the reason for which He has given us life, and that He has set His purpose into the foundation of every church, we can move on to understanding God’s purpose for birthing Britton Christian Church.

In 1990 a group of people at Britton Christian Church met together every Sunday night for the single purpose of discerning God’s purpose for us as a church. Out of that prayer time a single

thought arose which continues to shape us today. God spoke to our hearts and clearly called us to be a “Lighthouse of Hope to all people.” God gave us a detailed understanding of our ministry as a “Lighthouse of Hope to all people” which we shall cover in our study of **The Ministry of Britton Christian Church**, but the specifics of our ministry fall under two Scriptural mandates given by God.

The call of God for us to be a “Lighthouse of Hope to all people” has been ingrained in our souls as we seek to be faithful to God’s call to share Jesus, the Light of the world, with all people. Jesus said in Matthew 5,



“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

We live in a world that is groping around in the darkness, trying to find the path that leads to life, life that is fulfilling, meaningful, and of lasting value. We at Britton Christian Church believe that Jesus is the Abundant Life. God has called us to proclaim that message to everyone we meet in every place.

Our firm conviction that Jesus is the Light that illuminates the darkness was

not arrived at by a group of intellectuals, scholars, or authorities - it is the simple message that Jesus Himself shared while He was ministering on the earth. Jesus said in John's Gospel,

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Our mission as followers of Jesus at Britton Christian Church is to be a "Lighthouse of Hope to all people" by sharing the saving message of Jesus, the Light of the world.

To be a "Lighthouse of Hope to all people" is a pretty broad statement, but there is a more definitive expression of God's call for us a body of believers. We believe that the plan God has set before us, to be faithful to His call to be a "Lighthouse of Hope to all people," is shaped by two further Scriptures from God's Word. The two pillars of our mission statement are found in what is called the **Great Commission** and the **Great Commandment**. Let me share them with you.

Jesus gave the Great Commission in His parting words to His disciples as He prepared to ascend back to the Father

after His resurrection. It is important to think about how much weight last words carry. If you knew that you only had one final conversation with a family member or friend, you would want your words to impart life and purpose; you would want to pass on to them the most meaningful lessons you could offer. Jesus did the same when He delivered the Great Commission to His followers. Jesus' words of life are found in Matthew 28.

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

We as a church can let Jesus' light shine brightest when we are inviting all people into a relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them (discipling them) to walk in obedience to Jesus' teaching.



The second component of God's plan for us to be a "Lighthouse of Hope to all people" is the Great Commandment. The Great Commandment is found in Matthew 22:34-40 where Jesus was quizzed by one of the Pharisees. The Pharisee was trying to trick Jesus by asking Him what was the greatest of all the commandments. Jesus responded to his question by saying,

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:34-40)

We, as a church, can fulfill God's call to be a "Lighthouse of Hope to all people" by teaching the followers of Jesus first and foremost to love God with all of their heart, soul, and mind. In developing this kind of love for God, people are then able to love other people with God's love.

I used to have a T-shirt that said, "If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything." Zig Ziglar once said, "People do not plan to fail, they fail to plan." At Britton Christian Church we believe that God's work is too important for us to fail to take an uncompromising stand for the things that are foremost on the heart of God.

We live in a society that has experienced tremendous moral and spiritual upheaval through the decades. Things that were once taboo and never to be talked about are now flaunted and worn as a badge of courage for everyone to see. This ever-changing moral and spiritual climate has not quieted the cry of the human soul for something more, something real, and something meaningful. Our souls are crying out for God. God's Word teaches that real life, enduring peace, and salvation come only through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. At Britton Christian Church we feel an urgency to be about our Father's business, to stand strong as the winds of society continue to shift and change, to introduce people to Jesus, and then to walk with them as they grow in that relationship that will undergird them throughout their days.

**Our mission is to
be a lighthouse
of hope for all
people.**



THINK ABOUT IT

1) Why is it important for a person or a church to understand their purpose? Proverbs 29:18

2) Have you ever spent time in prayer and asked God to give you a personal mission statement to help guide you in living your life? If so, how does your mission statement help you in making decisions and living faithfully in your relationship to God?

3) Why do you think Jesus chose the two guiding principles above all of the Commandments? How could these two Commandments change a church if they were taken seriously by all of its participants?

4) Can you write down the mission statement of Britton Christian Church and the two Scriptural pillars that undergird our mission? Give it a try.



LIGHTHOUSE OF HOPE

The ministry of Britton Christian Church flows from the mission. Everything we do must fall in line with the mission given us by God. The ministry of Britton Christian Church consists of the various avenues the Lord has opened for us to share with people their need of hope, salvation, forgiveness, and truth that only Jesus can bring. God has blessed us beyond our wildest belief over the years as we have seen Him open door after door for us to move out of the stained glass building and into the lives of people who need to hear the Good News of God's Son Jesus.

Just as our mission statement came from God, so our ministry has come from God as well. We are witnessing the unfolding of God's ministry among us, and we look forward to the future unfolding of God's ministry as we seek Him with all our hearts and desire to follow Him in faithfulness.

In 1990 the little group of believers who gathered around a table in our church and prayed each Sunday night were led to a Scripture that continues to shape what we do as followers of Jesus today. It is

important to know the content of the prayers of those who gathered around the table each Sunday night. We prayed, **"Lord, show us what You are doing in this community. Break our hearts with the things that break Yours. Help us to get involved in Your work."** Through continually seeking the Lord's leading and will, we were led to Matthew 25, the parable of the Sheep and the Goats that has shaped our ministry so strongly.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or

in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats is the only picture Jesus gave of the final judgment. He said the separation of the sheep and the goats will be determined by how the "least of these" is treated. Jesus said that He can be found among the "least of these," and to turn them away, dismiss them, or take advantage of them is to reject Him. God sharpened our ears to the cries rising up around us. He tuned us in to the tears falling from the eyes of the broken. He led us to begin ministries that would reach out to those who were hurting and wondering if they would ever have hope again.

What is truly amazing about what God did in those days of our church is that we were struggling. We only had one service and there were only 70 something folks present in worship on any given Sunday. The nursery was locked since there weren't any babies. Our children's education classes were empty. The Regional Office of our denomination had contacted us about selling our building and moving elsewhere. The future did not look too bright for us at Britton Christian Church.

Logically, what God was leading us to do made no sense whatsoever. It would have made sense for us to have focused on "us" - what "we" needed, what "we" wanted, focus on those who were already part of BCC. But

when we humbled ourselves before the Lord in prayer, He led us to focus on the people who didn't know the Lord instead of the future of Britton Christian Church.

Was that poor management on our part? We weren't as concerned with management as we were obedience.

God was leading us to lay down our lives in service to those who needed a relationship with Jesus, were hurting intensely and. The first cry we heard coming from the neighborhood was the cry of hunger. We learned that there were more than 800 families in this neighborhood who were on some kind of government assistance. The closest food pantry was at Northwest 50th and MacArthur. God moved upon the hearts of Ernestine Thomas and Winnefred Owen and the **BritVil Food Pantry** was born in a garage.

The next cry the Lord allowed us to hear was the cry of children who would never make it through school if the Lord did not send someone to sincerely and genuinely care for them and challenge them to keep pressing on. Viki Bowen and many volunteers have been used by the Lord to touch the lives of so many children through the ministry of **Study Buddies**. They have shared more than books - they have shared the life-changing power of Jesus Christ in real and tangible ways.

Those were only the first of many ministries that have come about to reach who are hurting and needing help. It has been exciting to see the Lord continue to birth new opportunities to share the Gospel with people from all walks of life.

Another very exciting ministry move the Lord is founded upon the biblical model of Acts 2:42. In the early church, as the Lord began to add converts to the faith, those who had accepted Christ as their Savior began to witness the Lord knitting their lives together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Their time together was characterized by four components. We find this model in Acts 2:42.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

The members of the early church devoted themselves to studying God's Word, fellowship with one another, worship, and prayer. These are the keys to a healthy, growing, and effective church. This is the life-giving sustenance needed by the members of the Body to grow in relationship to God and one another.

The leaders of Britton Christian Church are working with intent and diligence to strengthen each of these areas of our life together as a church. It is and will continue to be a process of waiting on the Lord and making the necessary adjustments that He reveals, when He reveals them. Our leaders have sensed a great need for a plan whereby a person can enter into a course of study and progressively build their faith

and daily walk with God. We now have a comprehensive process where the followers of Jesus can grow and mature in their faith so they in turn can share their faith with others.

We will continue to begin new small group Bible study opportunities, create fellowship opportunities for brothers and sisters in Christ to grow together, provide opportunities for people to enter into the presence of Almighty God through worship, and teach hungry souls how to slow down and be still before the Lord in prayer.

It is a humbling experience to see how God has been, and is, developing the ministry of our church to strengthen the Body of Christ and to reach out beyond the Body to those across our city who need to hear the Good News of Jesus. It is so very important that we continue to pray for sensitivity to the leadership of Almighty God so that we can move with Him into His glorious future. I am convinced, after having served as pastor for all these years that God has been laying a foundation to prepare us for even greater things to come in the future. I am thrilled that you and I are part of what God is doing and I look forward to watching His mighty hand work through us to let His light shine with brilliance in our city and beyond.

OUTREACH MINISTRY

- A.C.T. Prep Classes
- BCC Tennis Academy
- BritVil Food Pantry
- Cinco De Mayo
- English Classes
- Bethel Foundation
- King's Clinic
- Mid/High Learning Center
- Mission Sunday
- Mission Trips
- Study Buddies
- Sunday Worship

BODY LIFE MINISTRY

- Children's Church
- Committee Worker
- Elders And Deacons
- Jr. High And Sr. High Youth
- K-Group (Home Bible Studies)
- Lighthouse Choir
- Promise Keepers (Men's Group)
- Sunday School Classes
- Sunday Worship
- Weekly Bible Study
- Women's Bible Study



An important ministry opportunity that is vitally important to the health of our church is serving on the Board. The Board is made up of elders, deacons and committee heads. All of these leaders work together in making decisions for our church body.

THINK ABOUT IT

1) Is ministry reserved only for the paid staff at Britton Church? What is “ministry” and who is to be involved?

2) What gifts has God given to you that you are or could use to share His love and salvation with others?

3) What ministry did God use to first draw you to Britton Christian Church?

4) Do you think most Christians feel comfortable referring to themselves as “ministers?” Why or why not?

5) Do you have a desire for God to use you in the lives of others? How are you living out your call to minister?

THE MEMBERS OF BRITTON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In every organization there are expectations placed before the prospective members to enable them to know what the core values of the group are and how they can help build and bless the organization. The organization is built around a “core” set of beliefs, goals, and objectives, and it is vitally important for all of the members to embrace these “core” beliefs.

For far too long churches have failed in communicating to their prospective members the expectations they have for membership. Most often people walk down the aisle, join the church, and settle into a pew. Jesus never called us to be pew sitters - He called us to be world changers, disciple-makers, and humble servants who willingly give of ourselves. Through our commitment as a servant of Jesus, He empowers us to touch the lives of others with the Gospel.

At Britton Christian Church we believe that God has ordained our existence. We as a church did not come about simply because a group of men and women decided to get together as a social club more than 100 years ago. God birthed Britton Christian Church to make an impact upon our community, and He is continuing His work among us all of these many years later. For us to faithfully follow God’s will in making disciples, reaching out to the hurting, and calling all people to a relationship to Jesus Christ, we must communicate clearly to those that God leads to Britton Christian Church the expectations of membership.

It is important to point out that these expectations are not designed to keep people away from seeking God through the ministry of Britton Christian Church. Anyone is welcome to attend our worship services, participate in Bible studies, and enjoy the fellowship of God’s people. A person can attend Britton Christian Church their entire life as an “attender,” but if a person desires to become a member of the Body of Christ at Britton Christian Church then we do have a set of expectations that we hold in order to enable people to fully realize their God-given potential as disciples of Jesus Christ.

God birthed Britton Christian Church to make an impact upon our community.

If those who commit to becoming members of Britton Christian Church will take to heart the commitments listed at the end of this booklet, then we will see the Lord use us to reach countless people from all walks of life with the message of Jesus Christ. He will unite us in unity and harmony as a Body of believers, and He will help us discover the gifts He has given us to be used for His glory.

NEXT STEPS:

- 1 There is one essential step that must take place before a person decides to become a member of Britton Christian Church and that is a decision to become a follower of Jesus. Our primary purpose at this church is to lead people into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- 2 Once a person accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior, then they need to pray about following Christ in baptism as an outward sign of an inward change of their heart.
- 3 When these steps are taken, then the person needs to pray about which church the Lord is leading them to plug in to so they can grow in their walk, discover their gifts given by God to be used to bring Him glory in serving others, and develop intimate fellowship with other believers.
- 4 If a person feels led by God to become a member of Britton Christian Church, then it is our responsibility to share with him or her what it means to be a member of the local church.

Membership at any church will never gain our right standing before God nor will it secure our salvation. For us to be made right with God we must accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and walk with Him daily.

CORE VALUES & COMMITMENTS

1 I will be committed to live out my **FAITH**

By Attending Worship and Bible Study

Hebrews 10:25

By Pursuing A Holy Lifestyle
Philippians 1:27

By Giving Of My Time, Talent, and Treasure

1 Corinthians 16:2

5 I will strive for **INTEGRITY**

By Being a Person of my Word

Matt 5:37

By Working at Everything with Excellence

Colossians 3:23

By Being a Good Steward of the Resources God has Given Me

1 Peter. 4:10

2 I will work to build **COMMUNITY**

By Acting In Love Toward My Brothers and Sisters in Christ

1 Peter 1:22

By Abstaining from Gossip
Ephesians 4:29

By Supporting the Leaders of our Church in Prayer

Hebrews 13:17

6 I will make the **BIBLE** the beacon of my life

By Trusting God's Word

2 Timothy 3:16

By Mediating on it Day and Night

Joshua 1:8

By Living Out God's Truth

James 1:22

3 I will make DISCIPLESHIP a priority

By Inviting the Unchurched to Attend

Luke 14:23

By Seeking to Make Visitors and New Members Feel Welcome

Romans 15:7

By Teaching People God's Ways

2 Timothy 2:2

7 I will embrace DIVERSITY

By Appreciating the Value in all People

Genesis 1:27

By Showing No Favoritism

James 2:1

By Helping All People to be United in Christ

Galatians 3:28

4 I will be of SERVICE to the Lord

By Discovering My Gifts and Talents

1 Peter 4:10

By Being Equipped to Serve by my Pastors

Ephesians 4:11-12

By Developing A Servant's Heart

Philippians 2:3-4,7

I understand these commitments of joining the church body and I agree to carry them out.

Signature

Date



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