

Mission Study

Irvine Presbyterian Church

Adopted by Session --- July 22, 2008
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Preface

The first version of this document was sent to Los Ranchos Presbytery, and was approved by its committee to be forwarded through the Presbytery process for endorsement.

In receiving and approving those materials, the Presbytery declared IPC ready to take the next steps in the pastoral search.

While the substance of that Mission Study has remained, the Session has acknowledged a need for further clarification of its guiding principles, and added attention to seeking the best wordings for the Mission Statement contained here.

Noting that wordings may be adjusted over time, as God leads, the Session has sought the best ways to represent the missional calling of IPC in this time and place.

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Part One

The Calling

Called into God's Mission

Irvine Presbyterian Church takes its primary missional lead from who God is, as he reveals himself in the scriptures, and from a deep appreciation of what God is doing in the world. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Triune God has offered redemption and healing to humankind in all of our rebellion and brokenness.

God has thereby broken the power of sin and death, and is inaugurating a new creation out of the old. By the restorative power of the Holy Spirit, transformation is taking place in and through Christ's New Covenant communities everywhere.

This redemptive work expresses itself through the restoration of four relationships:

- First and foremost, God's action in Christ has healed the brokenness between God and humankind. Every person has the opportunity to find forgiveness and acceptance by God through faith in Jesus. The restored relationship with God inaugurates deep transformation, which continues to express itself as the Spirit works in and through God's people.¹
- That transformation includes the substantial healing of the self, and the hope of becoming the people God created us to be.²
- This work extends out to the restoration of relationships between human persons as the Spirit heals and renews.³
- Finally, the blessing of God's transforming work extends to the restoration of his full creation, and he calls us to embrace our proper role as God's stewards of the earth.⁴

It is the wonder of God's mission that captures the hearts of Irvine Presbyterian Church. We are compelled to respond to God's calling through intentional engagement in activities that encourage, facilitate and demonstrate genuine transformation in all four relationships.

Called to Our Community

The Community

Irvine Presbyterian Church is centrally located in the City of Irvine along one of the major east/west arterials. The church is also centrally located in Orange County, California. Current projections have the county exceeding 3.2 million people by 2012.

Irvine Presbyterian draws its greatest number of congregants within an area bounded on the west by the 55 freeway, along the north following roughly Portola Parkway, along the east by Lake Forest and to the south following the 73 Toll Road. This area represents roughly 81 square miles and includes portions of the communities of Irvine, Tustin, Lake Forest, Laguna Woods, Costa Mesa and Newport Beach. Within this mission area, the current population is estimated to be almost 273,000 and it is projected to grow another 14% to 310,000 in the next five years. The current housing crisis may slow this growth because the housing development has slowed, but it is likely that the city will achieve full build out.

A Population Growing Older

Like so many communities in the US, the county is aging. The average age is currently estimated at 36. The population under 18 continues to decline as a percentage of the whole population. The average age within the Irvine mission area is a year higher at 37. The population under 18 in the church's mission area, like the county, is projected to decline as a percentage of the total population. At the county level the population under 18 is projected to be 26%. Within the Irvine mission area, it is projected to be 22%. As Irvine Presbyterian Church moves into the future, it must do so recognizing that a growing portion of the population in its mission area will be aging.

A Population Growing More Diverse

The racial/ethnic diversity is also significant in the mission area, but different from the county. The racial/ethnic diversity of the county is significant, with no single majority ethnic group at the county level. The fastest growing ethnic groups are Hispanic/Latino and Asian. Within the immediate mission area of Irvine Presbyterian, the diversity looks somewhat different. Like the county, the White, non-Hispanic population is declining as a percentage, but the second largest ethnic group, and one that is dramatically increasing as a percentage of the population, is Asian. Among the Asian population the largest percentage is Chinese (not Taiwanese), making up one in four Asian persons. Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese together comprise an additional 40%.

Educated and Affluent

Inside the Irvine mission area are several colleges and universities. One, the University of CA, Irvine, is a major research university that includes research and development partnerships with the private sector. The proximity of these institutions and the entrepreneurial spirit that is Orange County create part of the local ethos of the area. Education is highly valued. Residents seek it and participate actively.

As a community that is fairly affluent, highly educated and increasingly diverse the IPC mission area presents its own unique missional challenges. As a congregation, the church is relatively consistent with the larger profile of high education and affluence, though it is less reflective of the changing racial/ethnic face of its mission area. While the church is aware of the overall community ethos that education and affluence bring, it has struggled to know how to effectively bring the Gospel into it.

Orange County's reputation as a symbol of affluence and wealth is no myth: there are over 113,000 millionaire households here. The call to find security in the false hope of materialism is loud and persistent, reaching even our children. How best to be the church and to equip people for ministry in the face of a relentless consumer culture is an increasingly necessary discussion point for our fellowship at IPC, as we confront both the pressures of the culture and our own hearts.

There is a growing understanding that the church's primary mission is about becoming faithful disciples and making future disciples who will undertake God's mission in this place, at this time. Yet currently, no integrated strategy is in place to guide that effort. Leadership increasingly believes that a key to more faithfully fulfilling the church's missional calling is in a more intentional disciple-making effort.

Local Needs

There is a long history of faithful commitment to "missions" here. The commitment has grown, not declined over the years, as the definition of missions has been broadened to appreciate the missional calling of the local congregation to both near and far. It has become a clear calling at IPC to act both locally and globally to make God's mission our own. Many have hopes to intentionally expand our current outreach to those who are hurting and hopeless within blocks of our own church campus.

To do this, we will need to explore more deeply our local mission context in order to increase awareness of the often under-the-surface needs nearby. We have little doubt that the local mission field is full of opportunity for caring and creative response by those who wish to become bolder about demonstrating kingdom faith, both across the world and on our own doorsteps.⁵

Generational Transition

Perhaps the largest challenge facing Irvine Presbyterian Church is how to prepare for the next major phase of mission. The church was founded by a young pastor, who gathered many Baby Boomers around him.⁶ These Boomers became the core of the church and this continues to be the core demographic profile of the church (though not exclusively so!). The church must develop a strategy to ensure that it can effectively transition to the next generation. In today's rapidly changing social environment, that is not an easy task. Generations are very different. What appeals to Boomers may not appeal to the generations following them. Now is the time to address this so that the good mission work of this church can transcend its founding generation.

As a church, Irvine Presbyterian desires to look for ways through word and deed to infuse the Irvine mission area with the good news that God is at work in the world to heal and restore creation. At the same time, the church wants to continue to play an active role in God's mission to the larger world.

Responding to the Call

Foundational to our understanding of God's calling in this time and place is our Presbyterian belief that "God calls the church...to join the mission of Jesus Christ in service to the world. As it participates in that mission, the church is called to worship God in Jesus Christ, who reigns over the world." (G-1.0200)

"In the present age, the church's ministries of evangelism and caring for creation, of compassion and reconciliation, are signs of God's reign, and offer hope in the midst of life-denying situations. That hope...is sustained by the power of God present in the church as it ministers and worships." (W-7.6002)

In light of the mission of God in the world and our mission context, Irvine Presbyterian Church must and will respond to God's calling to engage our culture as faithful disciples and, through our efforts in the power of the Holy Spirit, play the part allotted to us in seeing our world healed, redeemed and transformed for God's glory.

Mission Statement

***Together, we will follow Jesus as Lord, make disciples,
and engage our culture with God's transforming love.***

Together: As the Triune God, in essence, is community, so also are we called into community, both with God and with one another. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we participate together in God's mission. (1 Peter 2:9)

Follow Jesus as Lord: Jesus called his first disciples with the simple invitation, "Follow me." (Mark 1:17) The amazing journey of abundant life in Christ still unfolds as we respond to those words, becoming disciples of the one at whose name "every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)

Make disciples: This imperative derives from Jesus' "Great Commission," and urges us to invite everyone to respond to God's grace, and become intentional and growing Christ-followers. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Engage our culture with God's transforming love: As we follow Jesus, his love compels us to live, not for ourselves, but for him. By the power of the Holy Spirit at work in and through us, we become his ambassadors to the world in which we live. (2 Corinthians 5:14-20) This calls us to understand and thoughtfully engage our culture (the beliefs, customs, practices and social behavior of a particular people), as agents of God's reconciliation. The mission area of IPC is multicultural, making this no easy task.

It begins with self-examination, because it is indeed *our* culture. We are part of it and, perhaps too often, a reflection of it. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to "*not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of (our minds).*" (Romans 12:2) The tendency of American Christianity has often been to "flee popular culture, fight it, or simply fall for it." Instead, we must learn to "communicate in culture like ambassadors, to create culture like artists and even counter culture like aliens."⁷

. Then, as we consider the real needs of our neighbors, we must listen to how God is uniquely calling and gifting us to be agents of justice and mercy, and heralds of salvation in this time and place.

Thus, our mission as Irvine Presbyterian Church is to follow Jesus as Lord, to make disciples, and to engage our culture with God's transforming love. This is the imperative that will drive planning and ministry development.

Part Two

Strategic Objectives --- Exposition and Initiatives

In this section of the Mission Study, we identify four strategic objectives that will help us fulfill our mission more effectively in the coming three to five years.

There are many aspects of IPC's life and ministry that are not directly addressed in these objectives. This is because:

1. These aspects have been identified as current areas of strength, and are expected to continue as such with ongoing attention and support, or
2. They are very specific and targeted programs, and it is not in the scope of this study to address each individual ministry at this time.

Instead, the strategic objectives focus on four major areas of new or renewed emphasis that will help us build on our strengths and address identified needs. In most cases, they cut across nearly every program area. They invite prayerful evaluation of existing ministries in light of the objectives' importance to the health of IPC in the coming years.

It is the ongoing role of leadership to establish missional priorities and evaluate all aspects of IPC's ministry with the goals of fulfilling our divine calling and being faithful stewards of the resources God provides. This may, at times, mean saying 'no' to even the good in order to say 'yes' to the best for God's purposes and glory.

Strategic objectives focus our efforts for a period of time. They tell us how we will move toward our envisioned future. They require regular review and allow for any necessary mid-course corrections along the way. Strategic objectives are not intended to be enduring, but to force a needed emphasis for a particular time in the life of a congregation. They will guide us in the allocation of our resources and in what our areas of focus will be.

Strategic Objective #1 --- DISCIPLESHIP

Implement a broadly based, ongoing, and integrated process that effectively leads people into intentional, continual, transformational discipleship.

Exposition

As God's people we are invited – even summoned – to participate with God in the great mission of restoring humankind from brokenness and rebellion into fellowship with God and one another. Taken in such broad terms this can seem a daunting task. Our missional context is a *secular* culture that largely claims to have known and rejected the message of Jesus as irrelevant to the *real* issues of life. Too often our *Christian* culture has responded with a gospel that places such emphasis on our future destiny that God's desire for our present transformation--so that we can be salt and light to the world--is obscured.

To ensure that we fully respond to Christ's calling to participate in God's great mission of redemption, the leadership of Irvine Presbyterian Church must lead us into intimate familiarity with the words and life of Jesus, "*fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus leads by example and invites us to discover the hidden treasure of a life lived within the blessed reign of the Father. We learn from Jesus how to do what he taught and how, by grace, to be "*transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Colossians 1:13).

There is much confusion today regarding discipleship. In general terms, "a disciple or apprentice, is simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is."⁸ Thus, disciples of Jesus are simply those who, by choice and by grace, stay with Jesus to learn how to live in the kingdom of God, how to become more like him, and thereby how to do what he asks of us.

Discipleship as a strategic objective of Irvine Presbyterian Church therefore must establish a broadly based, integrated practice that leads people into intimate familiarity with, and emulation of, the life of Jesus. A measure of success would be inward transformation resulting in observable change in thought, feeling, and character to "*clean the inside of the cup*" (Matthew 23:25) and thereby to carry out our role as salt and light.

Jesus left us with a specific calling to make disciples by immersing people in the reality of God's majesty and presence:

Go therefore 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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
Matthew 28:19-20⁹

It is important to note what is not said in this "mission statement" from Jesus: "make converts to a particular 'faith and practice,'" "baptize people into church membership," "grow the number of congregants in attendance."

An effective discipleship paradigm should recognize there is some of this kind of confusion among us about what "being a Christian" means, compared to what Jesus intended in the great commission. In fact, in both the culture at large and indeed in much of the western church today, one can be a Christian forever without ever becoming a disciple or experiencing deep transformation – no questions asked! All of which compels this question: "what is it IPC needs to do to effectively and regularly make disciples of Jesus rather than simply attract consumers of Christian goods and services?"

The strategic objective of developing a core competency and practice of routinely making disciples of Jesus must address this question at the outset. It must develop deeply insightful and effective answers to this question. And then it must guide both the session and executive staff of IPC in establishing a shared vision of these answers.

Once a clear vision for discipleship is shared by the leadership of IPC, we can implement the initiatives needed to realize this objective.

Initiatives

1. Develop a compelling and biblical vision of discipleship at IPC that is broadly based, ongoing and integrated across our lives and our service.
2. Deeply collaborate in the sharing of this vision with the session and staff to a point of reverent and thankful confidence that we are of one heart and mind in our vision of discipleship at IPC.
3. Plan the implementation of this vision and provide for both a dynamic launch and a sustainable vitality, and ensure it is fully inclusive of all by leveraging the broadest possible array of venues and opportunities for being and making disciples as a community of believers.
4. Ensure that the core objectives of our discipleship process reflect the threefold nature of the great commission given to us by our Lord and Master:
 - a. Make disciples
 - b. Immerse them in the reality of God's Trinitarian majesty and presence
 - c. Teach them to do what Jesus himself taught us to do.

Strategic Objective #2 --- SERVANTHOOD

Engage the members of IPC to focus outward and, by our service and presence, to meet the needs of the people in our community and to make visible the transforming power of Jesus.

Exposition

Our servanthood originates in Christ's love for us and is in response to that love.

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." John 15:12

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them, and was raised again."

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

The servanthood strategic objective is based on our understanding of the word of God, on our call as disciples in Christian community, and in response to the TCI¹⁰ survey and report from our congregation. We believe that moving forward on this objective will be an expression of the kingdom, of God's restorative work and not just "social services."

This objective is inextricably tied to the first objective of leading people into discipleship. These objectives are like two blades of a pair of scissors; in order to be effective, they must go together. With the discipleship objective we will learn how to be more like Jesus and by his grace learn how to do the things he taught us to do. Becoming disciples of Christ is more than just knowing what we should do; it is in fact doing it. This servanthood objective is "doing what Christ taught us to do." We have been called to do what Jesus did and that is to bring hope to the hopeless and to bring the abundant life to those who are broken and in need.

"What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Corinthians 4:5

Jesus taught that whenever we help someone in need, we are in fact helping him.

"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....I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:35-36,40

This objective also addresses some of the main issues identified in the TCI survey. Commitment to missions was one of the most frequently mentioned strengths in the church. However, much of our attention has been on global missions. Although global missions will continue to be an important focus, this objective highlights the importance of community involvement and awareness.

According to the focus groups held by TAG¹¹, our "young adults have a passion for social justice issues both locally and globally." The TAG report also indicated that "if a church is not aware of its community or of those in its community who do not know Jesus, then it has more than likely become ingrown."

If we focus ourselves outwards towards meeting the needs of those in our community, we see ourselves as being the hands and feet of Jesus, bringing freedom to those oppressed by our culture, by addiction, by the brokenness of their lives.

To be effective healers in our world would also mean that we would acknowledge our own brokenness and need for healing. The end result would be that the people of IPC would understand ourselves to be a community of people who serve rather than people who are served. We would be doing the work of discipleship, being apprentices of Jesus. We would become a healing and healed community.

In order to accomplish this goal we would need to educate, equip, and engage the members of IPC in a process of finding the real needs of the community and developing creative ways to meet those needs.

Initiatives

1. Explore the real, under-the-surface human needs of the community with a view towards informing ways IPC can more intentionally engage in serving those needs as agents of God's restoration.
2. Study and pray around ways that we as disciples of Christ can put our money and time where our hearts are in serving our community, starting with the leadership and then intentionally broadening the process to the whole congregation.
3. Develop and deepen our collaboration with other churches, faith communities, agencies, schools, and the city of Irvine, in serving those in need in Irvine and in the surrounding communities.
4. Where God leads us to the intersection of our unique resources and unmet needs in the community, we will develop creative solutions to help fill the gaps.

Strategic Objective #3 --- The FUTURE

Commit all necessary resources to imagine, plan, and prepare for the next major phase of IPC's life and mission, building upon the past but planning for a future beyond the current congregational profile.

Exposition

It is fairly clear by simply looking at the demographic profile of the congregation that IPC is aging. What began under the tutelage of a Silent Generation Pastor and early elders has blossomed into a predominately Boomer church. Many who first came as young Boomers, either still in college or fresh out and starting their careers are now entering their empty nester years.

The danger for IPC at this juncture is that it remains a Boomer church and fails to make a generational jump. Instead of Boomers facing their elder years seeking ways to give themselves and the mission of the church away in ways that allow it to evolve, they run the risk of holding the church for themselves and inhibiting the activities necessary to catch the next generational missional wave.

To avoid this, it is incumbent upon the current leadership to make a full and serious commitment to imagining and then experimenting with what the next wave for IPC will look like.

This will include a full reflection of all things missional including worship styles, imagery, language, programs, facilities, and leadership. To promote this necessary future thinking, the church needs to create the space within which the future can be incubated. New ideas are often provided a protected space to imagine, create, explore, play, and shape new possibilities. This is the purpose of *The Future* objective. Unless this task is given priority and the commitment of resources, it will not happen.

The concept of incubation includes an additional element: safety. While no one really wants to intentionally sabotage new and creative ideas, our human nature is such that we do so anyway. For many reasons, many tied to a general distaste of change and fear, good-hearted people can create so many restrictions—some so small that on their face they seem insignificant—that imagination is thwarted. By making this commitment, we effectively create the safe space necessary for imagination to flower.

God has given humans the ability to imagine. It is out of imagination that most things new, exciting, and effective emerge. This strategy is about creating the space within which that can happen. Please note that this strategy does not say what the next wave looks like. That is the task. The objective is to make imagination possible within a safe space.

Initiatives

1. Session will establish a Next Wave Task Force and provide it with the necessary budget and leadership support required to successfully imagine, plan, innovate, and experiment until the future vision takes substantive form.
2. The Next Wave Task Force will begin in earnest to research, looking at emerging best practices and considering how those might be translated into the Irvine area mission environment.

3. The Next Wave Task Force will explore ways to better connect with the collegiate environment that so infuses the Irvine mission area and integrate that into its imaginative musings and experiments.
4. The Next Wave Task Force will work with appropriate existing structures and programs to assess the extent they may be captured as opportunities to explore new practices. (For example, Veritas)
5. The Next Wave Task force will generate an annual report of the unfolding vision, practices discovered, ideas explored, and experiments done that, taken together, begin to define the shape to come.

Strategic Objective #4 --- LEADERSHIP

Develop leadership systems that call, equip, deploy, and connect servant leaders in and with the ministry and mission of IPC.

Exposition

In a visionary and energetic call to service, Paul speaks about using gifts for the sake of ministry and says in part, "... if the gift is leadership, let the leader govern diligently ..." (paraphrase, Romans 12:8).

This objective acknowledges that leadership in the church is composed both of lay leaders (elected and non-elected) and professional staff, who serve together by the calling of God, and who are placed by God's will, equipped with Holy Spirit gifts, and engaged together in servant ministries.

Long before there were TCI survey results to indicate concern about church leadership, many on the leadership team (lay and professional) and in the congregation at large had noted significant challenges.

Today, two matters are quickly observable.

First that God is blessing IPC with faithful, intelligent, hard-working leaders who often swim upstream against currents of less-than-effective systems.

Second, that the systems within which they must operate need attention ... either in structure (how the systems relate to each other and to the responsibilities they manage) or in resourcing (how both human resources and system apparatus are designed, prepared, and placed for effective ministry oversight) ... in order to be strengthened in guiding and providing for the IPC ministries and congregational life.

To clarify: the objective statement references these concepts ---

"Leadership systems" – the overall structure which manages ministry and mission to the best advantage of Kingdom goals, smooth functioning, and massive congregational involvement.

"Calling" – sensing and responding to a divine summons, versus the concept of recruiting willing office-holders.

"Equipping" – the training in polity, process, and system management which (a) leads program well, (b) empowers the church for its ministry, and (c) equips all leaders for their roles in shepherding, healing, and trust-building care.

"Deploying" – placing leaders in the most advantageous roles, allowing them to engage in satisfying service, and surrounding them with teams of leadership and ministry support.

"Connecting" – developing collaborative cooperation within the leadership structure, enhancing the involvement of the church community, and reproducing leadership.

Initiatives

1. Research design options and describe the best practices for the calling, charter, and collaboration of the IPC elected leadership, and the pastoral and program staff.¹²

2. Refine the processes by which elected leaders are called, to focus on discernment of call and spiritual maturity, on gifts for leadership and ministry, and on the work of identifying, preparing, and mentoring future leaders.¹³
3. Design and create leadership equipping programs for elected and professional leaders.¹⁴
4. Develop and refine evaluative tools that measure the progress of ministry staff toward their goals, assisting them to succeed and grow.
5. Create communication systems and tools which share, in openness and transparency, the emerging IPC vision and mission, the meaning and focus of ministry programs, and the decision-making and directing efforts of IPC leadership as they address congregational concerns.
6. Create and/or adjust leadership structures, systems, and relationships that empower the development, oversight, and pursuit of the Session's strategic goals.

Footnotes:

¹ Text:

Romans 5:1-9

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

[6] You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7] Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. [8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[9] Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

² Texts:

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. [2] Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

³ Text:

Philippians 2:1-5

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

[3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[5] Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus

⁴ Texts:

Genesis 1:26-31

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

[27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

[29] Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. [30] And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

[31] God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

Romans 8:18-21

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. [19] The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. [20] For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

⁵ For consideration: Though the median household income in the city is around \$85,000, over 1800 students in Irvine Unified schools are receiving free and reduced lunch assistance, and over 500 financially struggling families are enrolled in TANF and CalWORKS assistance to needy families programs. The *Families Forward* homeless services agency (which IPC assists in supporting) served over 2,400 people with food pantry services last year. These statistics could easily be amplified beyond our Irvine city limits. In fact, over 214,000 people live below the federal poverty line in this, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation. In addition, over 1200 low-income Irvine families have asked to receive low-cost or free family counseling, parenting help, and community referrals from the Irvine Family Resource Center, a local school-linked counseling service. According to the 2007 California Healthy Kids Survey, which is done bi-annually in California K-12 schools, over 30% of Irvine's 11th graders reported feeling "sad and hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more" in the last 12 months. Between June of 2002 and July of 2004, eight suicides were reported in the city. Out of the over 3000 child abuse reports that are made *monthly* to Orange County Child Protective Services, over 100 come from Irvine. Over 300 domestic violence calls were made in Irvine last year, the highest of all South county cities (from: *The 13th Annual Conditions for Children in Orange County Report 2007*, and the City of Irvine's, *Indicators Report on the Conditions of Children, Youth and Families in Irvine, 2005*)

⁶ The founding Pastor, Ben Patterson, was not himself a Boomer and several of the founding leaders were not either but the draw in the early days was largely young Boomers starting families or still at University.

⁷ Further reflection is required to explore how we may be called to communicate in culture like ambassadors, create culture like artists and even counter culture like aliens. (See *The Culturally Savvy Christian* by Dick Staub)

⁸ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. New York: HarperOne, 1998. P. 282.

⁹ Jesus' Great Commission stands at the climactic end of the gospel narrative and represents nothing less than Jesus' parting words to his disciples according to Matthew. To point to the broader notion of critical texts, paraphrases can be often used to recover meanings sometimes lost in "word for word" translations. Consider: "As you go, make disciples of all types of people, immersing them in the reality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to do everything I have taught you..." (paraphrase, Mt. 28:19-20a). In addition to the reference to the consistent practice of conversion baptism in the early church, we also know that the very process of making disciples must include an adequate presentation of the person and work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: an immersion, if you will, in the reality, majesty, and presence of the Trinity.

¹⁰ TCI stands for the Transforming Church Index. This was the survey instrument which was completed by about 450 IPC members in January 2008, providing congregational input to the Mission Study process.

¹¹ TAG is The Armstrong Group, LLC, our Mission Study consultants.

¹² This work includes clarifying definitions and expectations for leader relationships, team building, and specific program responsibilities.

¹³ Special emphasis here is placed on "calling" as the work of God in bringing the larger leadership team together, and on the discernment of gifting for leadership relationships and roles.

¹⁴ Attention must be given to preparing for effective oversight of ministry programs; to shepherding the congregation through issues of ministry development and conflict; and to specialized equipping for new opportunities in ministry as they emerge through the adoption of our Strategic Objectives.