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The Long Range Vision of Bear Valley Church



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by the Bear Valley Pastoral Staff

Edited by Jim Walters

I. History and Background

Bear Valley Church has a fifty-year history of ministering in the West Metro area. Originally 'Lake Ridge Baptist Church," born out of a home Bible study, the infant church grew and bought property and built its first building at the corner of Sheridan and Yale. Then (as now) the church had one foot in the city and the other foot in the suburbs, and cared for people in both.

During the 1970's and 1980's, our church became a significant ministry force both in Denver and around the country. The "Church Unleashed" philosophy, radical at the time, is now commonplace in contemporary churches. It centers on our "core values,"

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| 1 | Simple Structure of Church Organization (few committees) |
| 2 | Maximum Use of Minimum Facility |
| 3 | Blending of the Roles of Clergy and Laity |
| 4 | Freedom to Experiment, Easy Permission Process |
| 5 | Emphasis on Growing the Kingdom, not the Church |

Through the 1980's, the church continued to expand its ministry beyond the Sheridan Blvd location, with multiple services (including the Seventh Day Adventist bldg on Hamden, the Jewell campus ("Green Gables" church; the Henry Middle School, and the Pecos (north) campus).

Around 1986, the leadership made a decision to make a major investment and re-locate the church to the present site. "This will give us a place to stand for at least the next twenty years" was the vision, and now, we can say, IT CAME TO PASS. With the acquisition of the land (through a merger with Green Gables chapel, a small church at the corner of Lee and Jewell), the church was able to bring all of its services to a single site, and use that site as a base for ministry both locally and globally.

Since moving into this facility in May 1991, we have carried out ministry for 16+ years. The total offerings to the church since then would exceed \$20 million dollars. We have baptized about 60 people per year, meaning about One Thousand people so far!! The investment into missions around the world would exceed \$4 million dollars.

The current vision of the church is "**Climbing Together the Upward Trails of Life.**"

This word picture has caught on with our members:
Using the historical values of "the church unleashed,"
we are connecting, maturing, and unleashing people
to go out and use their gifts, talents, and skills
for the glory, and the kingdom, of God.

The church has been used powerfully by God in many ways. Now comes the question:
What do we do next, to see that this continues for decades ahead?

II . The Long Range Vision – Introduction

Maximizing our spiritual effectiveness to the West Metro Area. That is our vision for the future, from now through the year 2020. We long for God to continue to use Bear Valley as powerfully as He is now, for decades to come.

We are currently the largest evangelical contemporary congregation in the area of south Lakewood. We have no significant competition, the nearest churches of any size and similarity being Southern Gables to the south, (three miles) and Applewood Baptist to the north (eight miles). We are seven miles north of the “church row” on West Bowles Avenue (West Bowles Community, Waterstone, and Foothills Bible).

We believe that God has called us to be a major spiritual force in this area: A body of people who **reach** out to the community, **teach** people the gospel story through our words and actions, **win** people to Christ, **develop** them as mature Christ-followers, and **unleash** them to do ministry among their circles of influence.

Also, God has raised us up (uniquely) to be a missions-driven congregation; with upwards of 25% of our general offerings being invested in missions. Each year, about 15 - 20% of our average weekly attendance will go on a missions trip. A steady stream of people has gone out from BVC as long-term missionaries (Gudemans, Newtons, Millers, Katherine Hines, et al).

With our two large-scale worship services, more than 60 home-based small groups, and our six multi-housing venues, **we CAN reach and bless this community for Christ.**

Currently, we are at a good place as a large local church. Our congregation is as large as it's been in years, our giving is at an all-time high (exceeding the budget), and our morale is great. Our leadership is unified in vision and direction, and recent challenges issued by our senior pastor have triggered a strong response (e.g., Bill Fay evangelism training, Christmas parties, Hybels books).

We are a “maturing” church but have by no means become an “aging” or “declining” church. More adults attend a class or small group than at anytime ever in the history of the church (the number of small groups has grown from 12 to 65 in the last 10 years).

Our youth groups are at an all-time high in both quantity and quality. Children's ministry is effective and fully-staffed with volunteer teachers. Men's, Women's, and Senior's groups are all functioning at all-time high levels of energy and ministry.

III The Future of our church field (Lakewood)

The **City of Lakewood** is the fourth largest city in Colorado (population = 145,000).

As of the [census](#) of 2000, there were 60,531 households, and 36,500 families residing in the city. There were 62,422 housing units. The racial makeup of the city was:

87% [White](#), 2% African American, and 10% other.

Hispanic or [Latino](#) of any race was 14.5% of the population.

Out of 60,500 households, 27% of these had children under the age of 18.

45% were married couples, 11% were female householder, 40% were non-families.

Only 8% of the households have someone who is 65 years or older.

The average household size is 2.3 and the average family size is 2.9

The age range of Lakewood's population is spread out widely:

under 18 yrs = 22%; 18 to 24 yrs = 10%

25 to 44 yrs = 32% 45 to 64 yrs = 23%

over 65 yrs = 12%

The median income for a household was \$48,000, and the median income for families was \$57,000. The per capita income for the city was \$25,500. Only 5% of the families (7% of the population) lives beneath the poverty line, and that includes 9.5% of those under 18 and 5% of those over age 65.

Lakewood's Future: The upcoming move of **St Anthony's (West) Hospital** to the Federal Center area (accompanied by major office, retail and residential development) will generate the economic engine needed to propel Lakewood into the next twenty years of prosperity and urban attractiveness.

The Bel Mar urban center has not survived but thrived, and today is a model for other cities. Its retail/office/residence model will be duplicated in the "St Anthony's West" area around the hospital, and according to former mayor Steve Burkholder, "almost five times as many people and shops will be built around the Federal Center area by the time it is fully re-developed

RTD is planning to move up the construction on the "**Cold Spring**" **light rail station**, which will bring a double-track rail service to Lakewood; along with more local bus routes. Also, a continuation (single) track will go to the Jefferson County Courthouse.

Overall, Lakewood is in great shape – the envy of many other suburban areas.

IV. Bear Valley Church Demographics

Consider the following data that comes from our church mailing list.

| Total # of Households | 995 | Remarks |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | # of Households | |
| Age Group | | |
| Ages 20-35 | 172 | |
| Ages 36-50 | 288 | Largest sub-group by age |
| Ages 50-65 | 239 | 2 nd largest sub-group |
| Ages 66+ | 154 | |
| Age Unknown | 142 | |
| | # of Households | |
| Zip Code | | |
| 80227 | 175 | Between Jewell and Hamden |
| 80232 | 155 | The area around the church |
| 80228 | 142 | Green Mtn |
| 80226 | 117 | North of the church |
| | 589 | Within 4 miles of BVC |
| 80123 | 56 | South of 285 E of Kipling |
| 80127 | 45 | South of 285 W of Kipling |
| 80214 | 25 | |
| 80219 | 23 | |
| 80465 | 21 | Golden including Quincy/C 470 |
| 80236 | 18 | |
| 80235 | 12 | |
| | 200 | South, within 8 miles |
| 80215 | 25 | All other zip codes |
| 80128 | 16 | Are in this final group |
| 80401 | 16 | |
| 80110 | 12 | |
| | 69 | |
| Misc | 137 | Various parts of Denver |
| | # of Households | Summary of the Above |
| Area | | |
| Within 4 miles | 589 | |
| 4-8 miles | 200 | |
| 8+ miles | 69 | |

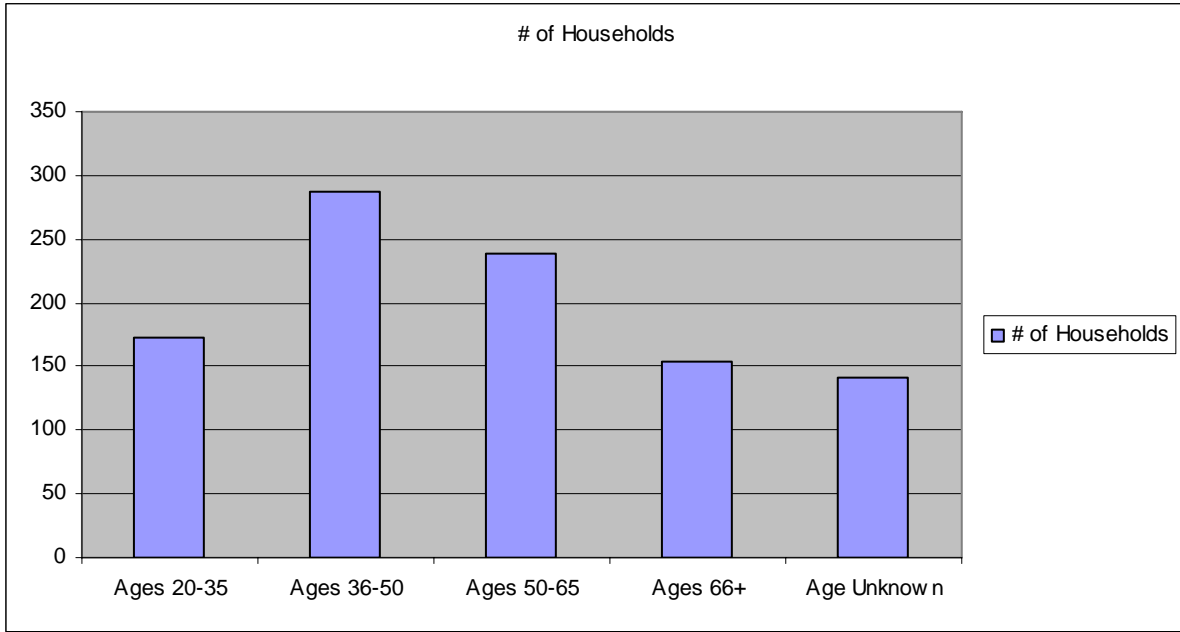


Table 1: Households sorted by Age

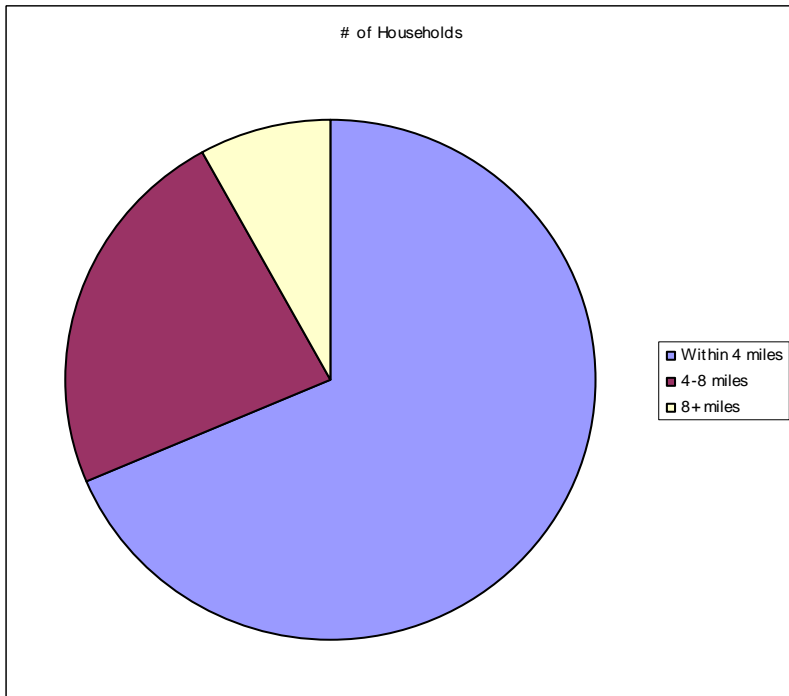


Figure 1: Households sorted by Distance from the church

V. The Question of Relocating

Recent conversations with the pastors of Red Rocks Baptist Church have been enlightening. This is the old South Sheridan Baptist Church that just built a new church in front of Bear Creek Park (Morrison and C470). Not counting the land cost, their buildings cost \$16 million dollars.

Waterstone Church (nee Centennial) was built at around \$14 million (between 1998 and 2002); Lookout Mountain Church was built at around \$13 million in 2003 (per Bobby Fisher).

The option to sell this facility and attempt to build a new (and larger) one somewhere out along C 470 does not appear practical, as (a) we have no spiritual leading to do that; (b) the costs are prohibitive (and would cut into missions) and (c) the government would be hostile to it.

VI. Parking: How Much is Enough?

With the recent addition of the south Carmody lot, and the implementation of the “People Mover” (the mini-bus with entrance stairs and a walk-down center aisle), we finally have adequate parking and shuttle capacity. On a well-attended Sunday, (or a special event concert) we will have more than 900 people at once. Therefore, our 448 spaces, times 2.2 people/ car average, is sufficient up to 1,000 people.

Nevertheless, attending our church does call for a certain “sacrificial” commitment involved with parking. Half of our cars will be parked in a “remote” lot; many will walk one or two blocks each way. Our feeling is, this is a worthy sacrifice.

Current parking situation

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------|----|
| Main Parking Lot | 208 | Police Academy | 48 |
| Motorcycle Shop dirt lot | 40 | North Carmody | 68 |
| Street parking | 24 | South Carmody | 60 |
| Total parking available | 448 | | |

Potential Additional Parking (available thru People Mover service)

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Kee's building | +35 |
| First bank and Med building | +40 |
| Qwest Bldg lot | +25 |
| Total potential | 100 |

VII. Conclusion: Let's Stay Here.

The location has worked well for twenty years, and has a bright future. The structural strength of our building is sound, and the costs of relocating are prohibitive. From here we can reach out and maximize our blessing to the West Metro area. Let's stay here and bring our vision to reality!

VIII. The Need to REBUILD.

The building is almost 20 years old and needs major renovations. The 20th anniversary will occur (Lord willing) on May 11, 2011. We have 3.5 years to prepare for it.

The major works that might be accomplished include:

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| 1 | Lower Level re-configured (for security and efficiency; more space for youth/kids) |
| 2 | New carpet and paint everywhere (except in worship center and office) |
| 3 | Fire Alarm system replaced (this is not optional) |
| 4 | Roof and parking lot upgraded (we do have some savings for this) |
| 5 | Second Floor over the gym (3,500 new square feet; 3 classrooms; large welcome area) |
| 6 | Lower floor of gym partitioned between reception room and kids romper room |
| 7 | Enlarged women's rest room upstairs |
| 8 | More area for youth ministry (by a hallway reconfiguration) |

We will be more intentional in being good stewards of the environment and reducing the impact our building has on the energy issues.

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|---|--|
| 1 | Installing tinted windows on the west and southwest sides |
| 2 | Replacing some light fixtures with high-efficiency types |
| 3 | Upgrading heater and air conditioners to more efficient units |
| 4 | Considering the possibility of photovoltaic solar system on the flat roof |
| 5 | Installing a bicycle rack that would be used on Sundays (saves parking also) |

IX. "For the Kingdom" Capital Campaign

Definition: We will ask people to make a commitment to give "over and above" regular giving to a REBUILD fund, for 3 years. This fund will need about \$2,000,000 to completely pay for the planned renovations. We will need written pledges to secure an interim bank loan for the major construction. We may also need a mortgage at the end of the renovations, if they are accomplished (and the bills paid) within three years, and contributions are either lacking or slow in coming.

NOTE: our first capital effort was "Our Place to Stand," the second was to "Move the World" and now "For the Kingdom" which completes the triad of values carved in stone on our porch.

This truly is a campaign "for the Kingdom" because we're not doing it just to enjoy a nicer building (honestly, our people aren't that worried about it), but rather we're going to make these sacrifices (\$2 million over and above our regular giving) to provide a fully-functional and contemporary, first-class facility for the next generation of attenders who come into BVC and into the Kingdom of God. This is for the next generation of BVC people to have a place to use to connect, mature and unleash believers to move Lakewood, Metro Denver and the World toward Christ.

X. The Vision Beyond Renovations.

The renovation of the building is only the first phase of the Long Range Vision. The “meat and potatoes” of our vision involves a number of ministry upgrades, enhancements, teaching tools, meeting revisions, schedule changes, etc.

As we make these changes, be sure that our core values will not change. We will hold fast to these critical commitments:

Bible- Based - Our foundation is declaring God’s ancient truths with fresh and practical applications for today’s and tomorrow’s generations.

House of Prayer – Prayer takes place every day in the building and in home group meetings. We have multiple prayer teams, plus a “prayer room” that is dedicated to after-service ministry (listening to and praying over people with specific needs).

United Leadership - Our pastoral staff is a team of leaders, who work closely with the deacons as they manage our affairs.

Communicate Our Direction From God - The leadership must continue to communicate often to the whole church family how God is leading us as a church.

Friendly Church - This goes way beyond our great greeters and parking people. It must include all of us including ushers, leaders and **everybody**.

Mission- Driven Church - If we have a “brand,” it is Missions. We will continue to encourage 10%+ of our people to go out on short term mission trips. Many more can be active locally. All of us have influence through our jobs, neighbors, and families.

Multiple- Growth Paths – We are preparing new approaches to deal with new attenders who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. We recognize that some people need more “structured” training than others.

XI. Specific Elements of the Strategic Vision

A. We may transition to three Sunday Services perhaps as early as Easter 2009. When the building is more than 80% full (around 400+) it becomes a barrier to growth. Since Saturday Service did not catch on in this community, we believe the next solution is to add a third Sunday morning service, identical to the others.

The new schedule is likely to be: 8:00am, 9:20am (yes, 9-twenty), and 11:00am. One “order of service” repeated three times, maximizing the investment of resources and will achieve the greatest results. Instead of trying to be “all things to all people,” this format says “This is who we are, this is what we do, this is our style of worship, etc.”

The “three period” format allows us to better utilize our own parking, because the people who come to the 8:00am service will leave after that time, or, at the latest, after the 9:20 class hour. This opens up parking spaces for 11:00am arrivals.

B. We will implement new methodologies of making disciples:

An integrated approach to “reach/ win / teach / develop / deploy.” would give us a more seamless process to move a new person,

1st, from visitor to attender

2nd, from attender to “connected” attender (in a group or class)

3rd, through membership orientation to membership (baptism if needed)

4th, through “Life Keys” to ministry involvement

There is no single pathway that will serve all new attenders, as they come to BVC from a variety of backgrounds and spiritual growth experiences.

Some need “Christian Basics” class as well as “one-on-one” mentoring.

Others are ready to jump in to “intermediate” level classes on day one

A few are ready for “leadership development” (e.g., seminary interns)

C. We will set up a spiritual growth tracking system that does not currently exist (in our church or any church to our knowledge). To be intentional about helping people grow, means we must find a way to measure their starting point, their progress, and their outcomes. Granted, not everyone will utilize this resource, but we believe many people will be excited to have a web-based personal spiritual growth curriculum, tailored to their knowledge background, their current maturity level, and their own goals and dreams.

This will involve re-structuring our staff around specific areas of training:

- #1 One staff team dedicated to this outreach-greeting-enfolding-developing process
- #2 An initial interview by a member of this team to “assess” needs of a new arrival
- #3 A web-based “spiritual growth plan” that can be tailored to each person, and also stored electronically, accessed through a password, and updated.
- #4 The assignment to each learner, a personal mentor, or trainer, for the long term.
- #5 An array of self-paced learning opportunities, in a variety of media, so that each individual can develop their own plan for spiritual growth.
- #6 An enlarged church library that offers the specific materials assigned in the personal growth plans.

D. Learners will be able to measure themselves against a standard, which we call our “Portrait of a World-Moving Christian.” Thus, they can see their progress as well as areas where they need to focus. This “portrait” involves eight traits of a mature believer:

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|---|
| Walks with God in a grace-based relationship |
| Knows their way around the Bible |
| Practices prayer as a part of their spiritual lifestyle |
| Attends and experiences worship regularly |
| Connects to other believers in a closely connected setting |
| Enjoys good stewardship of time, talent, and treasure |
| Recognizes their spiritual gifts, temperament, and passions |
| Serves other people and shares their faith openly |

Our conviction is that any follower of Christ who exhibits these traits, would have to backslide to keep from moving people toward the Kingdom!

E. We will expand the subject areas of our adult training ministries, beyond standard-type Bible book series and studies through Christian books, on Christian life, to include:

- #1. Basic Christianity for those with almost zero Biblical training.
Many of our younger adult new attenders exhibit virtually no knowledge of the Bible narrative whatsoever. We will offer “primer” courses.
- #2. Understanding of the gospel and the ability to share one’s beliefs.
This can include “evangelism” training (e.g.: “Share without Fear” by Bill Fay) and also “apologetics” training (perhaps the seminar written by Bud Oaster)
- #3. Purely “evangelistic” small groups. These are not bible studies, rather, they are community groups, (hiking, biking, pool, poker, whatever) where the leaders bring intentional efforts to dialogue and converse about the gospel. These groups go after people who would not come to Bible Study per se. Pathways church has shown that groups like these, that do no “traditional” group activities at first, can be effective in reaching the unchurched.
- #4. Reaching out to our increasingly diverse, uninformed non-Christian population (Moslems, Hindus, Scientology, absolutely no religious experience, etc.)
It is time to begin thinking as if we are located in a “foreign mission field.”
- #5. Orientation and exposure to the dangers of fundamentalist Islamism.
While we recognize that most Muslims are peaceful, that small segment that is committed to Jihad represents a major threat to the free world. Use of videos such as John Ankerburg, and the Caner brothers, will become more commonplace, to keep everyone updated as to this issue.

- #6. Leadership development in mission, teaching, and ministry contexts.
Currently, we have no operating method for leadership training, other than mentoring one-on-one, which is often in a context of seminary requirement. Our mentoring system will be enhanced to include “leadership development.”
- #7. Training in financial stewardship and money management as elements of wise discipleship. We’d love to see each adult in our church go through Crown Ministries training, that it might enhance their own financial management skills. We teach giving as a vital part of discipleship, not just as a way to meet the church budget.
- #8. Peacemaking as a lifestyle at home and in church. Relationships are fractured everywhere, and we want our church to be a culture of peace and peacemaking.
- E. We will place greater emphasis on “family” issues, (marriage, parenting, singles) and equipping young parents to be competent and responsible to train their kids.
- #1 Our strategy will be to see our church as a “partner” to parents as they serve their families by being the primary spiritual trainers of their kids.
This means that we’ll do some intentional family-inclusive events, classes, even mission trips.
- #2. We will promote asking families to consider a church schedule where their children attend worship with them. (Currently, many families only come for one session, attending worship while their children attend a class or a youth group. Then the whole family departs.) Thus, the family rarely worships together.
- #3 We will work with blended families whose children are often present only two weekends out of four. These have special needs and schedules to contend with.
- #4 We recognize that fully one half of our adults are currently “single” in status. Rather than having one “singles” group, there are many, plus our singles are connected into and serving in almost every area of church life.

- F. Connections into small groups, classes and mentoring partnerships are still the mainstay of our staff's discipling ministry. We plan to enlarge these ministries and develop "councils" of lay leaders to guide both "group" and "mentoring" work.

On our pastoral staff, we will create sub-teams, work groups, for connecting and for family ministry. We'll also create a lay-led "group staff" that will serve as coaches and supporters to leaders, each person coaching several group leaders. We believe our group network will grow from 65 to 100.

- G. Continue our Seniors ministry and development new approaches to the rapidly increasing population of retirees, which might include a regular weekday service/ luncheon in the new fellowship area, utilizing the favorite hymns of this generation that are not often sung on Sunday morning.
- H. The newest population of aging seniors are those in "independent living" and "assisted living" centers. These people are mostly NOT cognitively impaired and are deserving of our outreach and mission efforts.
- I. Experiment with new services, on Saturday and / or Sunday evenings. These reach out to special demographics other than our majority group. They might include ethnic / language groups, or that portion of "very young adults" who want something different than our main services. Currently the "Regeneration" service is our expression in this area.
- J. Bring environmental and energy conservation issues into our training milieu, as a part of "stewardship." Perhaps utilize both energy efficient and renewal methodologies to exemplify this value to the larger community.

XI. Missions Commitments

We will continue our emphases on missions through giving in the budget, Move The World, short term mission trips, and encouraging our people to be involved. We expect no reduction in missions, but a growth in the future.

- A. Likely more of our on-going missions support will be going to third-world nationals working in their own countries, rather than US missionaries serving long-term.
- B. Over time, more of our missions investments will be aimed at our two priority arenas: the multihousing population of the Metro Denver area, and the 1040 window (between 10 degrees and 40 degrees N Latitude, in Asia).
- C. Locally, our Multi-housing ministry will continue to give us prime access to the "lost and the lonely" in Lakewood. We will be expanding into as many as twenty locations, with workers from other churches coming alongside us in the strategy. In some areas we will have our own apartment; in others, we'll use "apt life" to deploy our workers into the community. We may be using a converted bus someday, as a "mobile chapel" to conduct services in multihousing settings.

D. We will always be open to incubate church plant groups, to work with language churches, to provide training and internships for future ministers. The “long grey line” of interns and seminarians who have come through BVC will continue to march forward into full-time vocational service. It is not uncommon for us to have five or more interns working in some capacity at the church or its ministries.

E. Mission trips remain a key tool in giving more and more people an opportunity to stretch themselves during a short-term project. We have also seen that people who go on a short term mission trip tend to become more involved in missions over the course of their life, in one capacity or another.

XII. Summary of our analysis and our vision

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| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long history, good name in the community Solid congregational strength (attendance/ offering) Unity between leadership and church body Steady flow of new visitors Strategic location for the West Metro area |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging facility Inefficient use of education space Crowded hallways and restrooms Comfort (complacency) with existing class/group methods |
| Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to remain the largest evangelical church in the area Expansion and innovation in our disciple-making systems Renovation of the building: with new space for ministry |
| Threats | <p>If we wait too long to renovate, the aging building could become a barrier for new people. Costs only go up, and as the congregation ages, or declines, it could become too difficult to do all that is needed to insure a bright future. Currently we face little “competition” from other churches.</p> |

In summary, ***This the Place, and Now is the Time!***

We believe that God CAN continue to use us powerfully, just as He is now, for decades to come.