

Treasuring Christ Together  
Expanding the Vision to Include the  
*Global Diaconate*, Church Planting,  
and Campus Multiplication

Approved by the Council of Elders  
Bethlehem Baptist Church  
4-27-04

In response to fresh compelling ideas from the congregation, it has seemed good to the Council of Elders to revise and expand the Vision of Treasuring Christ Together as follows.

**The Revision**

The vision of *Treasuring Christ Together* shall be expanded to include the *Global Diaconate*. This would mean that the vision would not only be for campus multiplication and church planting, but also for global ministries of Christ-exalting mercy, especially to the poorest of the poor and those who suffer. Thus the vision would be stated as follows:

Treasuring Christ Together  
is a vision for  
**new campuses,**  
**new churches,** and  
a ***Global Diaconate***  
as a means of  
*spreading a passion*  
*for the supremacy of God in all things*  
*for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.*

Financially, this means that all gifts to *TCT* would be apportioned 80/10/10 for the three parts of the vision: 80% to campus multiplication; 10% to church planting in America; 10% to the *Global Diaconate*.

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**Rationale**

**1. A permanent stream of income for capital expansion (campus multiplication) is different from a one-time building fund drive.**

It has become clear that the financial dimension of *Treasuring Christ Together* (*TCT*) is not only a fund drive for purchasing the Mounds View Campus, but is the creation of a stream of income that will last as long as the *TCT* vision and the blessing of God on it last. Therefore, we need to think about funding *TCT* differently than we do the funding of a single building. *TCT* calls for a perpetual stream of income to provide worship and

educational space for an ever-expanding movement of campus multiplication and church planting. Of course, God could lead the elders and congregation at any time toward a different vision for growth. But for now, we are thinking of ongoing disciple-making through campus multiplication.

This different way of looking at funding new buildings (not one-time, but continuous) raises the question whether a percentage of *TCT* giving should go to mission or mercy ministries beyond the new campuses, and beyond American church planting expenses. In other words, historically, Bethlehem has made the effort to give a certain percentage of our budget giving to missions. Presently about 32% of every dollar given to the church budget goes to missions. In our most recent fund drive (E4E) we did not apply that kind of percentage for missions, because we conceived of the fund drive as a one-time, temporary effort to put in place the base from which the missions can happen. In other words we thought of the capital fund drive as supporting missions by providing the home base.

But if *TCT* is not a one-time capital fund drive but a more or less permanent stream of income for campus multiplication and church planting, the question may be raised: should the principle of a percentage for missions or mercy ministries be applied to this stream of income, in the same way that we apply a percentage to the church budget? The answer we are giving is, Yes. There seems to be among our people a significant enthusiasm for making such a global priority part of the *TCT* vision. We are sensing that this is of the Lord.

**2. There is a clear call in the Bible for God’s people to have compassion on the poor, especially the poorest of the poor and those who are suffering.**

One thinks of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37 “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise.’”); and Paul’s words in Galatians 2:10 about his apostolic priorities (“Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”); and the call in Hebrews 13:3 to “remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body;” and Jesus’ command to befriend “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13).

While Bethlehem has an aggressive commitment to unreached peoples and the wider missionary movement, we have not made global ministries of mercy, a tangible, measurable priority in our giving (with some wonderful exceptions). We believe it would be a biblical and beautiful thing to do. It would “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10). One very appealing way to do it would be to make a percentage of our *TCT* giving go for major efforts among the poorest of the poor and those who are suffering.

**3. Making the *Global Diaconate* a percentage of *TCT* giving would function as a kind of governor on our tendency to spend more than we need to on our campus facilities.**

It would be a continual reminder that the buildings we buy or build are not ends in themselves and that they should be functional not exorbitant. While this is not the main rationale, it is a significant one and sends a message to the people that we value people and truth and mercy and Christ above fine facilities.

**4. Making the *Global Diaconate* a percentage of *TCT* giving will more clearly embody and communicate what *TCT* is.**

We say that *TCT* is about multiplying campuses and churches which will be launching pads and seed beds for Christ-exalting missions and justice and mercy. This vision will be more clearly embodied and communicated, if a portion of every gift to the *TCT* vision serves immediately the more distant goals that we say the campuses exist to accomplish.

**5. Making the *Global Diaconate* a percentage of *TCT* giving will, we believe, waken greater commitment and joy in giving to *TCT* so that, even though a smaller percentage of each dollar is used to pay down the loan, nevertheless, more money will come in so that the loan may be paid down even faster.**

One analogy for those who think we should limit *TCT* to the loan repayment and thus pay it down faster would be that most of us settle on a mortgage payment for our homes and then give money to the church. If we did not give as much to the church, we could pay down our house mortgage faster. But this would train us in very bad habits, and may leave us debt free in twenty years with no heart for the Lord or his work. It seems wise to pay *both* on the loan *and* into church planting and the *Global Diaconate*.

**6. Making the *Global Diaconate* a percentage of *TCT* giving addresses the concern that some have that the *TCT* stream of income would reduce our overall missions giving.**

This conception of *TCT* will probably insure that overall missions giving goes up.

**Explanation of Church Planting**

The *TCT* commitment to plant churches refers to new churches in America whose leadership shares out commitment to the BBC Elder Affirmation of Faith and our understanding of the “Ten Dimensions” that should mark a healthy church, as summed up in Appendix #1 of the booklet, “Treasuring Christ Together: The Next Step” approved by the Elders March 23, 2004 (pp. 10-11).

We intend that *TCT* church planting be understood broadly enough so as to include neighborhood ministries which are consciously designed to prepare for and lead to a church plant. For example, this part of *TCT* could fund Dwayne Gibbs’ efforts (both personnel and structures) to plant a church by starting with a “Say YES Center” in St. Paul.

Our assumption here is that one of the most effective ways to address the crisis of the urban poverty and suffering is by planting indigenous churches. Churches can provide a more holistic context for relational ministry than some programs. Therefore, we see urban church planting as one important way of helping the poor and needy near at home. (Deuteronomy 15:11, “You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, *in your land*.”)

### **Explanation of the *Global Diaconate***

The New Testament churches described in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) had at least a twofold ministry: elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13). The role of elders in the New Testament is spelled out in various texts fairly clearly with a focus on the ministry of the word and prayer and on the general oversight of the congregation. But the role of the deacons is not clearly spelled out.

Some years ago, when the elders of Bethlehem studied the role of deacons we concluded that Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:34-36, 41-44 offered something close to a “job description” for the Christian Diaconate.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was **hungry** and you [1] gave me food, I was **thirsty** and [2] you gave me drink, I was a **stranger** and you [3] welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was **naked** and you [4] clothed me, I was **sick** and you [5] visited me, I was **in prison** and you [6] came to me.” . . .

Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was [1] **hungry** and you gave me no food, I was [2] **thirsty** and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a [3] **stranger** and you did not welcome me, [4] **naked** and you did not clothe me, [5] **sick** and [6] **in prison** and you did not visit me.” <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister (ouv dihkonh,same,n / *diakonesamen*) to you?”

The summary word used in verse 44 for all the kinds of ministries mentioned here (the Greek *diakonēsamen*) is the same word used in 1 Timothy 3:10 and 13 for the work of deacons. We don’t mean to imply that only official deacons are to be involved in these ministries of mercy. We only mean to suggest that these are the kinds of ministries that the early church took special care to accomplish through a group of specially appointed servants. Thus the task included:

1. Feeding the hungry.
2. Providing water to the thirsty.
3. Welcoming the stranger, that is, caring for the unique needs of refugees.
4. Clothing those without sufficient clothes.

5. Visiting the sick with care and medical help.
6. Reaching out with help to prisoners.

We realize that the deacons were probably focused on the local body of believers. Nevertheless, if we conceive of this list of ministries as something the risen Christ cares about, because of his compassion and because it exalts his truth, worth, and beauty, then it would be fitting that we think in terms of a *Global Diaconate*, not just a local one. Even though we are to do good “especially to *the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:10), and even though Jesus is speaking in this parable, about showing mercy to “the least of these *my brothers*” (Matthew 25:40, that is, “my disciples”), nevertheless, Paul says, “Let us do good to *everyone*” (Galatians 6:10), and Jesus says, “Love your *enemies*, do good to *those who hate you*” (Luke 6:27). Therefore, we should not limit our effort to commend Christ through these ministries only to our own people or our own local situation, but, if we can, show the love of Christ in these ways in the places of extraordinary poverty and suffering in the world.

Thus what we mean by the *Global Diaconate* is a group of called and qualified people appointed by Bethlehem to put in place significant ministries of mercy among the poorest of the poor and among those who are suffering. The *Global Diaconate* may overlap somewhat with the strategies of the E3 missions budget of the church, but the aim is for the strategy of the *Global Diaconate* to tackle some issues of suffering that might not be as fully addressed without this unique focus.

Thus our intention in the *Global Diaconate* is to make possible some major efforts to tackle issues on the scale, for example, of Child Prostitution in Bangkok, or AIDS and the AIDS orphans in Sub Sahara Africa, or critical famine relief in Sudan, or a special orphanage project in Cameroon or Myanmar.

In addition we intend for the *Global Diaconate* to embrace possibilities of immediate emergency response so that, for example, a team would stand by ready to leave within days to go to a major crisis in the world for ministry and research concerning how we might best be of help.

We will continue to affirm that the greatest suffering from which people should be rescued is *eternal* suffering in hell. This eternal rescue happens only through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ (with supporting demonstrations of love in practical ways in this world). This priority would be affirmed mainly by the on-going effort to send and support missionaries from all our campuses and from the new churches. But we also realize that Christ calls us to be the kind of people whose compassion will not let us look the other way when we see great suffering.

### **Explanation of the Funding Proposal**

Since there are three commitments in the *TCT* vision (campus multiplication, church planting, and the *Global Diaconate*) it seems wise that these receive their funding through the new stream of income of gifts designated for *TCT*. This raises the question of

percentages. We are suggesting 80% for the campus multiplication, 10% for church planting, and 10% for the *Global Diaconate*. Thus when \$1,000,000 is given to TCT \$800,000 will go to campus multiplication, \$100,000 for church planting, and \$100,000 for the *Global Diaconate*.

### **The Rationale for These Percentages (80/10/10)**

1. 80% for campus multiplication. *TCT* is a way of providing worship and educational space for a growing family of disciples at Bethlehem. The campus multiplication part of the vision is in the category of a family buying a house to live in. The campus-home of the church facilitates all the other ministries, including church planting and the *Global Diaconate*. Therefore the lion's share of *TCT* funding goes to this "home purchase" (that is, campus multiplication), namely, 80%.
2. 10% for Church planting. Presently church planting is in the Bethlehem annual missions budget for about \$100,000. It seems more consistent to us to shift the funding of church planting from the BBC missions budget to the *TCT* stream of income (with the exception mentioned in "Detail" #1 below). This would accomplish at least four things: a) It will make church planting more consistently visible; b) it will put dollars behind each of the three elements of the *TCT* vision, rather than having two elements funded by *TCT* and one by the regular church budget; c) it will take the lid off funding for church planting and let it rise with the overall *TCT* giving; d) it will provide positive pressure to plan and work proactively in church planting because of the money that will be there for it. It seems to us that 10% (one million dollars for every ten million raised for *TCT*) is a very aggressive church planting amount and would require rigorous planning and preparation worthy of the great benefits of church planting.
3. 10% for the *Global Diaconate*. The 10% figure for the *Global Diaconate* emerged from two sides: a) several people independently suggested that we "tithes" the *TCT* income to some wider global effort; and b) it seemed wise that 80% of the *TCT* dollars be used to provide the foundations for the global cause, so that, together with the church planting goal of 10%, a similar percentage seems wise for the *Global Diaconate*.

### **How Would Disbursement Decisions Be Made?**

1. The Associate Pastor of Church Planting and Strategic Mobilization will work together with the Council of Elders to put in place two task forces, one for church planting and one for campus multiplication which will dream and pray and study and plan for the most strategic use of the *TCT* money for the accomplishments of the *TCT* goals. These plans for how the *TCT* money will be disbursed for campuses and church planting would be subject to the approval of the elders and the church.
2. The Council of Elders will appoint a pastoral staff person or lay person who is gifted and called to the vision of the *Global Diaconate*, and commission that person to

assemble a task force, with the approval of the Elders, to dream and pray and study and plan for the disbursements of 10% of the *TCT* income, in accord with the goals expressed above for the *Global Diaconate*. These plans for how the *TCT* money will be disbursed for Christ-exalting ministry to the poor and suffering would be subject to the approval of the elders and the church.

3. It is expected and desired that the process of deciding on all these disbursements will involve significant input from those in the church who have a special burden and insight into the three spheres of *TCT*.

### **Details**

1. Starting in the budget year of 2005 the church planting budget would all be unified in the *TCT* stream of income. This will avoid the confusing and unnecessary duplication of two separate budgets for church planting. We will not attempt to make that change in the 2004 budget since the church voted to include a church planting line item in the BBC budget this year. In taking the money for church planting out of the church budget and raising it through *TCT*, our intention is that this money be replaced by other kinds of missions commitments rather than be taken by non-missions needs.
2. As money accumulates for church planting and for the *Global Diaconate*, there will be no deadline for when the money must be spent. The money will accumulate from month to month and year to year. There is no requirement that it be spent in any given financial or calendar year. There should be flexibility to spend quickly on smaller projects or to let the money accumulate for a season to accomplish some greater project.
3. Except in extraordinary cases, with elder and church approval, we do not intend to borrow on our line of credit to fund church planting and the *Global Diaconate*. Rather, the money available for these is the percentages of actual giving.
4. There will be no designated giving *within TCT*. That would undermine the spirit of the rationale. Every dollar given to *TCT* goes 80% for campus multiplication, 10% for church planting, and 10% for the Global Diaconate.
5. There is no intention in this proposal to preempt the discussion by the elders as to whether the people who serve in the *Global Diaconate* must all be technically “deacons” and thus fulfill all the qualifications of deacons listed in 1 Timothy 3:7-13. That discussion and decision is yet to happen. The reason for using the term “diaconate” is that it embodies a community task and team that the New Testament seemed to make a priority because of the importance of caring for the poor and suffering.
6. The records of giving to *TCT* will be carefully kept by the financial secretary so that accurate percentages for church planting and the *Global Diaconate* will be known and

that amount of money will *not* be spent on other things but kept in readiness for the designated use.

7. No limits, except those implied in our Elder Affirmation of Faith and our understanding of Biblical morality, will be put on the expenditure of money for church planting and the *Global Diaconate*. The safeguards for proper spending will be the elder and congregational approval which is required. Thus, we are open to partnering with other agencies of mercy and church planting, if God so leads.
8. From time to time effort will be made by the elders and the preaching pastor to assist the people in how to pray and think through what proportion of their giving goes to the regular church budget and what percentage goes to *TCT*. We will trust God that he will orchestrate this so that all needs are met. We have the promise that he will meet all our needs according to his riches in glory, and part of those riches are the riches of wisdom and knowledge which are hidden in Christ. He will help us know how to do this.
9. From time to time there may be special efforts made by the church in extraordinary giving so as to pay down dramatically whatever loan is outstanding. We will be in regular prayer about how often and how aggressively such efforts will be pursued.
10. In the language of the *TCT* vision, we understand “campus multiplication” to include major physical campus expansions or developments to bring each campus to the optimal use for 2,000 to 2,500 attenders. In other words, *TCT* income could legitimately be spent to complete the E4E building downtown, and to complete phase two of the Mounds View campus, and to purchase the properties adjacent to the downtown campus on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, if the Elders and church approve of these expenditures.
11. In all our disbursements of money through the *Global Diaconate* we will make every effort to accomplish the mission of the church (to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ) and to support and advance the truth expressed in the BBC Elder Affirmation of Faith. We will not mandate that every group we may partner with agree on all the details, but will aim to exalt biblical truth even as we show biblical mercy.