

Forward Focused

Forward, Future and Outward Focused

Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

Jesse Sierks, Trentell Gordon, and Chris McInerny

Pastor Mandy:

Jesse, thanks for being here with us today. Jesse is going to talk a little bit about our new vision statement, which I'm very excited about. But first, Jesse, tell us a little bit about your journey at Horizons.

Jesse:

I've been coming here for about 7 or 8 years, me and my family, when I grew up, I was fairly religious and we went to church a lot.

I didn't always fit in there, so I kind of drifted away in my college years. But, when I was blessed with my first son, you know, I kind of felt a pull to do something more. And our best friend started coming here. And so we actually just very easily followed him. So, it was a fairly easy transition. I've been thankful to, to find a home here.

Pastor Mandy:

Awesome. Yes. Okay. So Jesse has been part he is part of the vision team. And so tell us our vision statement is up on the, board here, but it's connecting with our neighbors to live God's love. Yes. Now, the process to get to this statement is it has been a journey and we that had many steps so far.

We're continuing on with steps after this. But one of the steps that I am just so thankful for and so proud of, that the team did, is that we did 27 different community interviews. So this included, vision team, but also our steering team and some of our other leadership teams went out into the community to do interviews.

So, they interviewed the LPS school superintendent, Horizons neighbors, the HOA president, a city councilman, principals, local business owners, a police officer, and people in our community. We asked them, what do you what do you need from us? And

how can we partner with you? So, the Vision team continues to work. So they took those interviews and they did a lot of work. So tell us a little bit more about some of the work that the vision team has done.

Jesse:

The team started off as about 10 or 12 people. I was kind of not sure what to count you guys staff here, but and so we started with those interviews and there was a much larger team. Like I said, the steering committee was involved as well, and we sat down together and we had a big meeting so we can discuss a lot of the responses.

And then as the vision team, we met after that as a much smaller unit, and we really went over the context and we tried to look at the answers and look at the responses and find what was kind of tying them all together and trying to find some through lines. And there's a lot of secular people that we interviewed, as well as the regular, people in the congregation or people that go to go to churches.

And so we met over the course of several weeks, and we did like a Swot analysis, but this one was a saw. And so we looked at the strengths, the opportunities, the aspirations and the results. And that one on the screen to do. But and we took our time looking at the, looking at the answers and looking to see really what, the answers or what God was telling us to come through.

Pastor Mandy:

Yes. Awesome. It's been a really good process. How have you felt about the process so far?

Jesse:

I really enjoyed how deliberate we were. You know, we took our time. It wasn't over the weekend or even a month. We took a lot of time so we could talk to God. We could pray about what was being told to us or what we were seeing.

I really thought that was intentional. I thought that, led us to a good, to a good outcome here. Yeah. So, so with this statement. Right. A statement is just a statement. So with it, we still have work to do. We're still doing work and part of the work is to create these one, three and five year goals or strategies.

We're kind we've kind of defined them as okay. If our vision statement is connecting with our neighbors to live God's love. Who are our neighbors. So how are we going to define our

neighbors? So there's a couple of different ways, you know, and when we came up with the statement, it took a lot of time.

Like I said, a lot of thought and prayer. So we really wanted to be active. That's really where like the connecting verb came from. I don't live necessarily in the same neighborhood as Horizons. My neighbors are different than the, Horizons neighbors. And so as a congregation, we want to inspire people to connect with their own neighbors.

As a second step, we want to really create missionary spaces for the congregation or for the church to connect to Horizons' neighbors. That is, the people that may be around the building or around, the area here. It's a third step, as a church, we want to either connect with another church or other organization so we can connect to Lincoln as a whole.

So when we say our neighbors, we got to intentionally chose a broad statement so that we can say not just our own personal neighbors at home, but also people around Horizons and people even around Lincoln. Yeah, I'm really excited about that. Obviously there's going to be more to come about what that exactly looks like for each of us as individuals and as a church community.

Pastor Mandy:

So, Jesse, the last question here, what are your hopes for horizons through this process?

Jesse:

You know, this one was maybe the hardest one for me to come up with an answer. I really came with like enthusiasm and buy in. I know I'm fairly nervous up here, but when I was asked, I was scared. So when I asked to come up here or asked to be on the team, you know, I wasn't sure that I had, you know, enough to offer. I prayed about it and I talked with my wife about it, and I'm glad I said yes. So there's a lot of opportunities to say yes at Horizons. I just kind of hope that other people do as well.

Pastor Mandy:

Awesome. Thank you so much. Will you help me? thank Jesse, thanks.

Now, sometimes this is it's overlooked or not preached about because it's a lot easier to preach about. Jesus wants us to love everyone, and Jesus does these things and those things. And sometimes this passage is like, wait a minute.

This passage is warning, us that our love has to actually produce something, or else we will deal with the consequence is. So now this account of Jesus cursing the fig tree is found both in Matthew and in Mark. And there are a few slight differences in between the two versions of the story, but the same story.

So first of all, in Mark chapter 11, verses 12 through 14, it says this. The next day after leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry from far away. He noticed a fig tree in leaf. He went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing except leaves, since it wasn't the season for figs.

So he said, do it. No one will ever again eat your fruit. His disciples heard this. Now there is more to this story, but in Mark's account, this story is actually separated by when Jesus entered and cleared the temple. So we're going to flip to Matthew and talk about Matthew's account of clearing the temple. You probably remember this story, Matthew chapter one.

It says, Then Jesus went into the temple and threw out all of those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves. He said to them, it's written, my house will be called a house of prayer, but you've made it a hideout for crooks, people who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them.

Here Jesus is, driving out the sellers and the animals out of the temple. Because of the violence and the evil that was happening in the temple. But that last line, it's like Jesus drives out the temple, right? He clears the temple and then he says, people who are blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them.

So Jesus pauses his lesson to show kindness and compassion. But it's actually more than that. Jesus paused this lesson, and the lesson is going against the temple law. Now, the temple law found in Leviticus 21, also in some other, verses too. But in Leviticus 21 it says, the Lord said to Moses, say to Aaron, none of your future descendants who have some kind of imperfection are allowed to offer their gods food at the temple.

No one who has an imperfection will be allowed to make an offering. This includes anyone who is blind, crippled, disfigured, deformed, anyone who has a broken foot or hand, anyone who has a hunchback or two small, anyone who has an eye disease, a rash, scabs, or a crushed testicle. So here, Jesus clears the tables at the temple to make room at the table.

He's healing the blind and the lame at the temple. Those who are not allowed, according to the law, to be at the temple. But Jesus pauses that to make room at the table. Now, if we go

back to the fig story, right, so we have the beginning of the fig story. We have the Jesus clearing the temple and then finishing back up in Mark chapter 11, starting at verse 20, it says early in the morning as Jesus and his disciples were walking along, they saw the fig tree withered from the root up.

And Peter remembered and said to Jesus, Rabbi, look how the fig tree you cursed has dried up. And Jesus responded to them, have faith in God. I assure you that whoever says to this mountain be lifted up and thrown into the sea and doesn't waver but believes what is said will really happen. It will happen. Therefore I say to you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you will receive it, and it will be so for you.

And whenever you stand up to pray, if you have something against anyone, forgive so that your father in heaven may forgive you your wrongdoings. Now there's this analogy of what is happening at the temple. The Israel was compared to a fig tree multiple times. The fig tree rep represents the people of Israel. And it's more than just a prayer.

It's more than just about prayer. It's more than just about forgiveness and having faith, although those are important things. But Jesus is saying this is a message of God's judgment for anyone, not moving forward with the plan of salvation for all. See, Jesus changed things like we cannot go back to temple worship in the same way because Jesus came to that temple and healed the blind and lame at the temple like he was.

He was saying, right, this is this is something new, right? It's not that the Old Testament laws were not important to Jesus, because of course they were. But we're going to look at them different now. It's not the same. So Jesus is declaring that we need to move forward, that we need to produce fruit, or else now, by healing the blind and the lame in the temple, Jesus says there is room for everyone.

There is room for everyone. Now we have this new vision statement, and this vision statement is just a statement unless it produces fruit, right? We have work to do now that we have a vision statement. But here's what our vision statement will do for us. It will it will not allow things to get in the way of producing fruit, because things will try and get in the way of us producing fruit.

Now, here is an example you may have heard in the news this week about the United Methodist General Conference happening. A lot happened in the last two weeks at the General Conference. But there's one

issue that's probably the most controversial. So, the United Methodist General Conference voted to remove the language regarding homosexuals from the Book of Discipline.

It says, regarding clergy ordination and officiating same sex marriages. What does this mean? this means that there is room for everyone. We all read Scripture and view scripture different. We have different experiences. We have different traditions. We all use reasoning for discernment in different ways. We are all made unique by God, and God has given us that gift.

Now, removing the language pertaining to same sex marriage and ordination does not mean that we all think alike about this issue, because we don't. We don't think about it the same way throughout the denomination. We don't think about it the same way in our conference, which is Nebraska and Kansas churches. We don't think about it even here at Horizons.

We don't think about it in the same way. But now there is room for everyone. Now, those who voted to remove the language at the General Conference, and this is, delegates from all over the world, it passed with a 93% vote. All of those people who voted do not think alike. Many of the people who voted to remove the language are on the more conservative side of this issue.

However, removing the language means there is room for everyone and we can continue to move forward with ministry. We can continue to move forward producing fruit. Now there is, no pastor. There's no church that can be brought up with charges if they perform or if they refuse to perform same sex marriages. There is room for everyone now moving us forward together.

For those who want to remain united, Methodist means that we love everyone, even if we disagree. I am not naive to the fact that this is going to be difficult, that this is going to be challenging to do. Like the world tells us to pick a side, to find people who agree with you and stay there with them and sometimes they even say to hate the other side.

But I believe with all my heart, and I'm not just saying this, I believe that Horizons can and is and will be different. More like the Kingdom of God. Now maybe you're asking, what does this specifically mean for Horizons? That is something the steering team will be working through in the next couple months, few months, probably at the direction of the annual conference.

Our annual conference happens in the first part of June. Now, in the meantime, if you have any questions about any of this, I invite you to speak with me. Pastor Ashlee Alley Crawford, who was, reserved, delicate delegate at General Conference. She has said she is willing to talk to anyone who has questions. Our lay leader, Julie Berger, is willing to

answer any questions or just be an ear to listen to speak with our steering chair. Morgan Rose, we are open to conversation.

Now, here's what remains the same. It hasn't changed. Our mission has not changed. Our values have not changed. Our new vision statement is not changing, right? We are going to connect with our neighbors to live God's love. We have important work to do. We are going to continue moving forward, and we will not let something like this get in the way. Amen to that.

So how do we do this? How do we keep moving forward? How do we produce fruit? Well, what we do is we invest in the future to move us forward. We invest in the future to help us produce fruit. Sometimes that looks like invest in an individual.

So I'm going to invite Trentell up on stage. Trentell is our youth director. Many of you know him. Trentell is an amazing youth director and he has just that he has an amazing faith story that he shares. He has a great stage presence. He knows how to connect with the youth. He has just this big heart for Jesus, which is really important in a youth director. Trentell just recently finished up this intense two year training, through the Ministry Leadership Institute. He learned about theology, Old Testament studies, New Testament studies, adolescent development, public speaking. He did papers and projects and reading. Sometimes, he's like, this is a lot of work, and we're like, yes, but you keep going.

So he graduated from this program on Thursday. Wo want to first of all, I want to thank you for supporting Trentell, supporting him with your monetary donations, your prayers, your support. It is important that we are investing in individuals Trentell is worth investing in because we are investing in Trentell, who is investing in the next leaders of the church, which is really important.

So first of all, let's just congratulate, congratulate Trentell so thank you. Awesome. Yes. so, Trentell, I just have one question for you. What are what's one thing you are excited about that's moving Horizons forward?

Trentell:

I was just reading your question too, so I didn't come prepared. shock. Yeah. So. Gosh. I guess going off the vision statement of connecting our neighbors to live God's love, I think not. I think I know our students have a heart for service with our project serve, with serving our local community. Every summer, they always ask, hey, can we do a missions trip instead of rec and I think that speaks a lot to our students growth, and their willingness and their desire to serve the Lord and for others to know who Jesus is.

o looking at that and knowing not only the church of the future, but they're also part of the church today, and then building and cultivating that culture, serving God, loving God, and then connecting others to him, is extremely important. That gives me hope and which is the reason why I love this job, is because of our students, and they're so great.

Pastor Mandy:

Well, thank you. We're proud of you. You are amazing. it was a lot of work in MLI, but it's amazing that you persevered through it. And, what a gift you are to Horizons and to the kingdom of God. Thank you, thank you. All right. Thank you.

All right, I'm going to invite, Chris McInerney up here next. And he's going to tell us a little bit more about things and ways that we can, like, invest in the future to move us forward. There are a lot of different ways that we do this. There are a lot of different ways that we can invest in the future. Over the next few weeks and months, we're going to be talking about how we're going to just really dig into our vision statement and be grounded in our mission statement. I'm excited about that.

This is Chris McInerney. Chris, what's your Horizon story?

Chris:

Well, first I got a little story, I guess, when Aimee bought brought this, stool out, I got a little nervous because I'm a big guy on a little stool, and I have broken quite a few lawn chairs. those back chairs, you know, that everybody sits on. I think I'm up to, like, seven, so I'm glad it feels good right now.

My Horizons' journey was. It's easy for me because the math is easy. Heidi was pregnant with Riley, our middle child. We got involved first in the DZ. This is over at Scott Middle School. And then as our kids matured and grew up, we started volunteering in, with middle school, you know, and then, see, ten years ago, 12 years ago, VBS kind of became our big deal in our family super important, love that week.

We kind of stepped down this year, as our kids have started to serve themselves in the church, we're kind of stepping back and going a different direction.

Pastor Mandy:

Yeah. Yes. Well, we appreciate all your work. I know Derek appreciates all your work.

How has Horizons impacted your family? Like, why is Horizons so important to you?



Chris:

Youth, I guess it started. That was the draw. We were attending the church I grew up in here in Lincoln, and we had a young, you know, child, and there just wasn't a lot. We just didn't feel it at the church, you know, it was, at our old church, the membership was older, not a lot of young families.

So we started looking and that's what brought us to Horizons. Our journey, I guess, is centered around, you know, serving, with the youth. The past 15, 18 years. Now it's kind of full circle where I'm getting to see, my daughter serve and, different capacities here. That I guess that's been the coolest thing for me.

Pastor Mandy:

That's awesome. What can help Horizons continue to move forward? Bearing fruit? Well, I love the vision statement. and I'm going to steal something that I heard this week from, Adam pastor Adam Hamilton.

I think of Horizons and the United Methodist Church, like the, the big tent. Right. And we all have a seat at the table in the big tent. We have people that lean to the liberal side, people that lean to the conservative side. We have centrists, you know, people that are right in the middle. That's what I love about this place. This morning in men's group had a super tough conversation about some of the things that that we discussed here that Mandy discussed earlier.

But when we left that room, the one thing that I always think about is, loving God and loving people. and I think that's what Horizons is about. and as I was listening to, Adam Hamilton this week, and that seat at the table under the big tent kind of hit me. That's what I think our future is.

Then the vision of the church in 2050, I guess I've been here 20 years, so I was doing a little math. but, you know, where are we going to be in 20 years? In 2050? are these kids over here going to be sitting here with young kids, you know, or some of our young families going to be grandpas and grandmas here? That's to me is watching a church grow.

Pastor Mandy

How can others invest in this work? I know the last several months something has been kind of stirring within you. So tell us a little bit about that.

Chris:

Heidi and I did, you know, with youth and we kind of step back and, we got a I guess everybody gets the church giving update, right? And at the bottom there was a little deal that said, check this if you're interested in endowments. Heidi and I have been involved in an endowment with another nonprofit, and we've kind of seen the fruits of an endowment. And I'm not going to get into the how long dormant works, but it's almost like a retirement fund for the church. That's an easy way to, to put it.

So, we prayed a little bit, you know, and I talked to Derek and I talked to Mandy and said, you know, hey, I'd like to take this thing and kind of go with it. It's kind of become, we've gone from VBS to now. I feel like I'm an old man. I'm talking about endowments, but just heading toward, I guess I am.

The endowment for the church, we're getting started. We have a committee. I always look at it to, you know, some of us in this room have sat through some of our budget, you know, meetings, and we looked at where we are financially and it's so nice when you when you have a little bit of cushion, you know, in your finances, in your personal finances and the church needs that in our, in our church finances. That's what I'm hoping and praying that the endowment will do. You know, we aren't going to see those fruits right away, but the future, if that, if we can get this endowment to grow, will really, really help. the future of the church.

Pastor Mandy:

So, if somebody wants to invest, what do they need to do?

Chris

You can always get in contact with the church office and you can always contact me. I love to talk. I love to sit in front of groups, home groups, and talk. And I will put on a dog and pony show, however you want to say it, but, and talk about the endowment and what we can do, here at Horizons to get this thing to kick off.

Pastor Mandy

Thank you. Thank you so much, Chris.

Jesus showed kindness and compassion and was an example to us. Well, and while Jesus cursing the fig tree represents like an empty faith life, the bread and the juice of communion represents spiritual nourishment and the fruitful presence of Christ.

And we cannot deny that. We shouldn't deny the presence of Christ. And through the sacrament of Holy Communion, we are reminded about our connection to Christ. We are reminded about this ultimate source of spiritual food. We're reminded that we are called to bear fruit. And for every single person that's going to look a little bit different. But we are called to abide in him.

We think about communion in the night, in which Jesus gave himself, gave himself up for us, and he took the bread, and he gave thanks to you And he broke the bread, and he gave it to his disciples. And he said, take, eat. This is the body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And then when the supper was over, he took the cup, and he gave thanks to you, and he gave it to his disciples. And he said, drink from this, all of you, like this is the blood of my new covenant poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

We ask God to pour out the Holy Spirit on us, gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world, the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood and by your spirit. Make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church. All honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever.

Would you please join me in prayer, saying the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray?

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.