

VISION for 2021

Refresh. Renew. Rebuild. Recalibrate.

REFRESH

The theme of 2021... the idea of breathing new life, strength, vitality, and growth. I think of the disciples in John 20:22 –Jesus comes to them after the resurrection and finds them bewildered, worn, deflated and discouraged – he says to them “receive the Holy Spirit,” and He breathes upon them. He refreshes them! He renews them!

“**Refresh**” – found 34x in the ESV in its different forms (refresh, refreshing, refreshed, refreshment; restore, renew, renewal, etc.). It is found throughout the entirety of the Holy Scriptures— from Genesis through Philemon.

According to Webster’s Dictionary, it means to **restore strength, to animation, to revive; to freshen up, or reinvigorate; to restore or maintain by renewing supply, replenish.**

- 1) This term is not foreign to us, we understand the usage of this term in its stylistic convention.

Interior designers will often speak of “freshening up” a space. And what they mean by that is not changing the dimensions of the room, blowing out walls, and laying new foundations, etc. – because the room already has good structure, good bones if you will – but they are speaking of how the room breathes, how it feels, and what it communicates.

A fresh coat of paint, reconfiguring the room, the addition or subtraction of a piece of furniture, adding new textures and colors through the use of pillows, throws, rugs, etc. But, perhaps the greatest technique to refreshing a space is adjusting how light is transmitted through the room itself.

Just like this space (*the sanctuary*)... changes the outlook of the room!

- 2) We understand this term in its technical usage when we are on our computer or mobile device and the website we are visiting seems to be stuck (not functioning as it should). We go to the search bar and click the circle arrow to the right to “**refresh**” the page – to **restore** it to its proper function, to **revive** it, or **wake it up** – to **reanimate** it.

3) In a Theological sense (a spiritual sense), the bible speaks of refreshment in similar ways.

- In **Exodus 31:17** we are told the Sabbath is to be a day of **refreshment** – A day to reflect on the Lord and be **restored, replenished, renewed** – six days you shall labor, but on the seventh you shall rest **in** the Lord.
- In **2 Samuel 16:14**, David and his men are **refreshed** from a long day of persecution and rejection on the shores of the Jordan river.
- In the NT, the Apostle Paul speaks often of how his spirit, and the countenance of others, were **refreshed** by the brethren who ministered to them in **1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:13; 2 Tim. 1:16; Philemon 1:7**.
- In **Jeremiah 31:23-25**, God promises to **satisfy** and refresh the weary and weak soul.

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Once more they shall use these words in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I **restore** their fortunes... For I will **refresh** (*restore, satisfy, satiate*) their weary soul, and every languishing (*weakened, failing, fainting, sorrowful*) soul I will **replenish**.”

- This is similar to what Jesus says in **Matthew 11:28,29** (NET) – “Come to me, all you who are **weary** and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls.”
 - 2020 was a wearying year – a discouraging year.
 - I think it is safe to say that all of us have been looking forward to the end of this year – to be able to say “goodbye” to 2020 and “hello” to something new... the potential of something new and better – Amen?!
 - And that is what we have been talking about and praying about as a leadership. Looking at the state of the people of Metro, all that has transpired over the year (personally/corporately, locally/nationally), we can see that – as a people -- we are tired... we are weary. And we sense a deep need for a time of refreshment! A time to be **restored, rebuilt, and renewed**.
 - **Ecclesiastes 3** says, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven... a time to break down (2020), and a time to **build up** (2021)” (v.3).
- This brings us to the source of this **“building up,”** the source of **refreshment** and **renewal** – **JESUS**.
 - 2021 is going to be a year where we, as a church, press into Jesus.
 - The main things are not changing: Sunday mornings, we are going to be in the Word of God. Monday nights, we are going to be in the word of God. That is the foundation of who we are as a church. We are a Bible teaching church! That will never change!

- So, we are not changing the foundation, we are just going to ***more intentional*** about emphasizing certain aspects of Community within the format of church life.
- Case in point, **Acts 3:19,20** – Peter is delivering a moving sermon in response to the miraculous healing of crippled beggar. Here he exhorts his audience to **TURN toward the Lord** to receive healing and forgiveness, so “...that times of ***refreshing*** may come from the presence of the Lord...”
 - The focus of Peter’s exhortation is Jesus – He is the source of this ***refreshment***.
 - This ***renewal*** and ***restoration*** only comes from being in His presence.
 - Just as in Jeremiah 31 and Matthew 11, the Lord’s act of refreshing is a ***renewing act! An On-Going act!***
 - The noun “***times***” (*kairoi*) refers to special areas of the God’s authority in relation to restoring the kingdom, and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His people.
 - The root meaning of “***refreshing***,” when linked to the derived meaning of ***strengthening***, can then be interpreted as a time of potential for change and ***renewal***.
- And that is what we feel that Lord is calling us into – calling us OUT of a time of weariness and fatigue of 2020 into a time of ***REFRESHING*** and ***RENEWAL*** in 2021.
- Into a time of potential for revitalization, for growth, and for health.

Pastor Travis is going to talk more about ***refreshment*** and ***renewal*** on both a vertical and horizontal plane, but I want to talk briefly about one of the ways ***we hope to foster this refreshment and renewal*** – and that is in the area of community – specifically **Community Groups**.

If you remember, back in January of last year, we started a Marriage Seminar in the context of small groups or home groups, where the pastors lead 10 groups over a period of 6 weeks. Roughly, 160 people participated (more were on a waiting list to be part of a second Seminar). It was in that context that we discerned a deep need to refocus attention on Community – People were starving for it, and so we came up with a plan to reintroduce community groups.

Covid-19, however, interrupted that plan. It literally stripped the church of one of the characteristic markers of being church – i.e., COMMUNITY. And so, as we look into 2021, we are going to **RENEW** an emphasis on Community groups starting in January.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

January 17th – “***Sign-ups***” → Intro, Info, Interest

January 31st – “***Soft Launch***” → First meeting of community groups will be at the church.

February 21st – “***First Meeting in Homes***”

- The desire of Community Groups is to create spaces where people can connect both personally and spiritually on a more intimate level.

- A place where people can talk, and learn, and grow together.
- Where they can share life together in an environment that is conducive to mutual edification.
- Our hope is that through the renewal of Community Groups in 2021, that Metro will experience refreshment, renewal, and revitalization in our pursuit of God and our relationships with one another.

So, 2021, is going to be **A YEAR OF REFRESHMENT AND RENEWAL**. That comes by intentionally seeking the presence of Christ... as we gather together (corporately, in small groups, and individually).

REFRESH – I, personally, am looking forward to it, and am excited for what the Lord has for us, in the coming year!

RENEW

Our anchor in a time of weariness and fatigue is to fix our eyes upon Jesus, to look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

In this difficult year, it's been tempting and easy to fix our eyes elsewhere - to focus on what is in front of us - socially, economically and governmentally.

No doubt it has been chaotic and difficult - we all have been affected in one way or another - in our personal lives, in our work or business, and in our church.

So, as we consider refreshment and renewal on a vertical plane, let's turn in our Bible to **Isaiah 40**. Warren Wiersbe has a commentary you want to get into your hands on **Isaiah 40** titled "God Is Greater than Our Circumstances".

The Jewish nation was not praising God. Rather, they were complaining to Him that He seemed blind to their situation or did not have any concern for their problems. The Jewish people did not see open doors - they only saw the long road before them and they did not have the strength for the journey.

In their difficulty, they failed to understand the fact there is a God of all creation that makes a difference in everyday life. You ask anyone and they will say in some manner "I hope things will get back to normal soon."

People are tired. Here in this church, people are tired - for many reasons.

So, let's look to what God has to say to us today.

Isaiah 40:28-31

**[28] Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.**

**[29] He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.**

**[30] Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;**

**[31] but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint. (ESV)**

After explaining all the greatness and glory of God in v28, now Isaiah explains that God shares His power, strength and help will all those who depend on Him!

What an encouragement that is for us today going into 2021.

In verse 31, we see the word “wait”. The word **WAIT** does not suggest that we sit around and do nothing. It means “**to hope**”, to look to God for all that we need. This involves meditating on His character and His promises, praying, and seeking to glorify Him. And when we do rest in His unfailing strength, we will have our own strength renewed out of His abundant, unending resources.

There are times when it seems there is little energy left in our spiritual sails. There are times when we feel defeated and deflated and unable to rise above our circumstances. I just want you to know that regardless of how low you may feel today spiritually, there is help in the Lord for you!

In v31, God promises to help you “**mount up with wings as eagles.**” The words “**mount up**” mean “**to ascend.**” When an eagle flaps its wings and heads into the sky, it is a wonderful thing to behold. This great bird, held to the ground by the same gravity that binds us to the earth, stretches out those massive wings and with one great flap, it is airborne. It quickly rises, breaking the grip of gravity, rising higher until it is able to soar high above this world with its dangers, its strife and its problems.

Those who learn to “**hope in the Lord**” find that same kind of liberty in Him. He has a way of helping us break free from the things that bind us. He has a way of helping us to get above our problems, other people, sins, valleys, and circumstances. He has a way of allowing us to soar above the difficulties of this life - Praise God.

Now as we find strength in the Lord and receive His power and receive renewed strength - this will not only impact our lives, but also those around us.

Hebrews 10:24–25

[24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (ESV)

It’s so easy for us to forget the Gospel. That’s why the author of Hebrews tells us to stir one another up. By meeting regularly and encouraging each other, we’ll be reminded of the Lord Jesus. It’s much harder to forget the Gospel when you’re surrounded by community. The stirring up is motivating one another to live on earth as citizens of heaven who are anticipating a better hope to be fully realized when “**the Day**” draws near.

Now let's pray these things in as we worship.

REBUILD

We've heard the plans going forward into the new year, we've touched on the refreshment to come in the launching of community groups, we've looked at the horizontal and vertical ways in which we are moving forward as a collective body of believers into the new year, and now we're going to look at some practical ways we can "rebuild" some of the gaps and broken walls that this last year have left us.

Adding on to what Pastor Chris has spoken about "reviving, freshening up, and replenishing" the places that we already have, I too would like to emphasize this; we still have walls! Literal walls. We still have means to teach the Word, share the Word (via livestream, internet resources). We still have classroom space to bring up your children in the Word (Metropolis and Metropolis Mini's). Yes, there are some areas and ministries that are no longer applicable to our current congregation, but this is the biggest point I feel to communicate: God isn't done working!

We have been SO blessed, for many years, sitting under the teaching and shepherding of Pastor Richard, and we have also been so blessed with the means of going overseas to share the Good News of Jesus Christ to people all around the globe - and though we cannot physically go out into the world and tell of the everlasting Hope of Jesus, we still have the ability to do this via technology; we still have the means to share the Good News to our neighbors, whether it be in person or via a link to an online service, and we still have the means to pour the Good News into the hearts and minds of your children...but to be frank, we need help.

There are "walls" and areas in the church that have taken some major hits this past year. We've seen it, we've felt it, we've experienced it. It can be discouraging, looking around at the various ministries and remembering what once was, who was there before, what we were able to do then versus what we are able to do now, but again, God isn't done working! And we are still called to serve Him and to be a part of the advancing of His Heavenly Kingdom...to give hope to a hopeless world!

We can recall the story of Nehemiah, cupbearer for King Artaxerxes, upon hearing news from his fellow Jewish brothers that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were burnt and broken, Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted and prayed over the city, the place of his fathers' graves lying in ruins. Having seen the downcast face and broken heart of Nehemiah, we read in **Nehemiah 2:4**

"Then the King (Artaxerxes) said to me (Nehemiah), 'What are you requesting'? So I prayed to the God of heaven."

Found in Nehemiah's response are two points that are applicable for where we are at today.

1) Following Artaxerxes question, we read Nehemiah's words **"So I prayed to the God of heaven."**

Every week we have an opportunity to gather corporately to exalt, glorify, and worship God. Today we have an opportunity to pray together in light of the practical question, "there are areas in the church desperately in need of help, so what do we do now?". Like Nehemiah, the first thing we need to do is look to our Provider. God has set up this church we call Metro. It's by His provision that we are gathered here today, it's by His provision that I am speaking into an amplified microphone so you can hear me clearly, it's by His provision that we have lights, resources, and the means to gather. Like Nehemiah, we need to bring our sorrows, our troubles, and our needs to God in prayer.

2) In the words of theologian John Stott

"When the king asked Nehemiah what he wanted, he first "prayed to the God of heaven" and then asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild it. He was neither so super-spiritual that he cried only to God and considered human help superfluous nor so super-confident in human resources that he considered prayer to God unnecessary. No. Prayer and action are not alternative options. Nor are they incompatible with each other. They belong together, and either without the other is dangerously unbalanced. It is evident from Nehemiah's first two chapters that he was a man of prayer. But this did not prevent him from asking the king for permission to go to Jerusalem, for letters to the governors of the province of Trans-Euphrates to grant him safe conduct, and for an additional letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, asking for timber for the rebuilding operations."

Yes, we need to wholly look to God to be our Provider...He IS our Provider, but we must also step up, and respond in a practical way. Right now, we don't need timber, we don't need letters for safe passage across a hostile and foreign land, we need workers, we need volunteers...we need physical bodies to provide practical help. We need your help!

We still have the classroom space to pour the beauty, light, hope, and truth of Jesus into the hearts and minds of your Children. We still have the walls, we still have the space, the Lord is working through Brelynn, Brooke and Justin Thomson to provide the teaching material, but they are in desperate need of volunteers. The walls are still standing, God is still moving and working, but we need help to RESTRENGTHEN those walls! They need volunteers to spend time with your children, to teach your children, to pour out the heart of Jesus to your children.

We also have the ability to broadcast the Word of God throughout the globe! We have five computers back in the AV booth with the means to process in real time what we get to experience here; the teaching of the Word of God. We have the same, faithful, hardworking, five people serving week after week, sometimes pulling double duty on Sunday services to come straight from work on Monday to serve again for Monday night service. We have the

walls! We have the technology, we have the means, but we need to RESTRENGTHEN the walls!
We need workers!

Some of you may think, “but I don’t have any experience in teaching children, and I barely know how to operate a computer.” Remember Nehemiah! He was a cupbearer, but God used Him to lead a team to REBUILD Jerusalem.

Now, I certainly don’t want to be a bummer, but this is the hard, but HOPEFUL truth of where we’re at. God isn’t done working!! He is still calling us to serve Him and make His name known! We have the undeserved privilege of being citizens in His Heavenly Kingdom, and we have the honor of serving Him. Metropolis, AV team, Usher team, these are the walls that have taken the hardest hits in 2020, and these are the walls that we now have the opportunity to REBUILD and RESTRENGTHEN, side by side, serving our Great and Mighty King.

Some of our brothers and sisters cannot be here to serve in their normal capacities due to COVID, but for those of us here today, for those of us who can, let’s go into the new year knowing and trusting that the Lord is not done working in you and I, He’s not done working in and through Metro.

REFRESHED BY ONE ANOTHER

Romans 15:32 (CSB) and that, by God's will, I may come to you with joy and **be refreshed together** with you.

be refreshed together

The sense is to rest — be refreshed together with others

with you

Paul had a specific group of people in whose company he was looking forward to being refreshed — the believers in Rome (where Nero was ruling).

They had so much refreshment in the Lord that they were able to refresh others in a culture radically hostile to the Gospel and those who lived it and proclaimed it

1 Corinthians 16:17–18 (CSB) ¹⁷I am **delighted** to have Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus present, **because** these men have made up for your absence. ¹⁸For **they have refreshed my spirit and yours**. Therefore recognize such people.

Refreshed — the sense of the word here is to **cause someone** to gain relief from toil

They have refreshed my spirit

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus **caused** Paul and the Corinthians to be refreshed — gain relief from toil

2 Corinthians 7:13 (CSB) ¹³For this reason we have been comforted. In addition to our own comfort, we rejoiced even more over the joy Titus had, because his spirit was **refreshed by all of you**.

Refreshed — Again, the sense of the word is *to be caused to take a break in order to be refreshed*

THIS IS SO HUGE — At the heart of the King and His Kingdom is an *others first ethos*.

The ethos of fallen culture is: What do I get — I'll do this if I can get that

We have been saved to and called to be a contrast community

2 Timothy 1:16 (CSB) ¹⁶May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because **he**

often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

Refreshed — Here the sense of the word is to **revive** — **renew** — **give new life**

Onesiphorous and his household did this **often** for Paul

Philemon 7 (CSB) ⁷For I have great joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been **refreshed through you**, brother.

refreshed

The apostle Paul had great joy and was encouraged by Philemon's LOVE

Philemon loved people by causing the hearts of the saints to be refreshed — to cease from labor

I'm thinking of how Paul said that we are to bear one another's burdens — not bail on them.