

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis Closing Worship
Write the “Vision: “Can You See It?”
June 18, 2018

Scripture/Text: Habakkuk 2:2-3 “... write the vision make it plain on tablets, that he may run who read it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak and will not lie. Though it tarries wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

This morning, I would like to greet you in the name of our precious Lord and Savior. Before I begin my sermon, I would like to express a Happy Father’s Day to all of you whether you are a biological father or God has gifted you to be a Father figure to someone. In addition, I welcome churches that are live streaming and utilizing this service for your worship service today. Turn to your neighbor and repeat these words – **“Write the Vision:” Can You See It!**

As I shared on Friday in the Episcopal Address, I embarked on a major adventure to take a deep dive to learn about the (four Virginias) as Dr. Lovett Weems, Professor at Wesley Theological Seminary described in his research. As a result, in working with the District Superintendents, I implemented the Bishop’s Chat and Chew that started this past November. During the Chat and Chews, I have seen 3255 individuals, traveled to 16 Districts, held 32 sessions with clergy

and laity separately, engaged in dialogued for 128 hours and traveled 3712 miles in an eight month duration.

One may ask. Why would you do that? I am glad you ask. The Bible states in Proverbs 29:18 – “... that without a vision the people perish.” However, I like Eugene Peterson’s in the Message Bible that states “... if people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves. But, when they attend to what God reveals; they are most blessed.”

According to church consultant George Barna, a “**vision**” is a clear mental picture of a preferable future, imparted by God to His chosen servants based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.

The Bible contains examples of people who had a clearly defined vision (a) Adam and Eve was to be fruitful and multiply; and have dominion over the earth; (b) Moses was to get the children out of Israel and teach them the law of God; (c) and Jesus was to seek and save the lost.

According to Andy Stanley, Pastor of North Point and author of the book *Visioneering ...* “states that the importance of visioning begins with 3 important facts.”

1. A vision is “**birth**” out of a **concern**. A vision often begins with the inability to accept things the way they are. Something will bother you; disturb you; get under your skin.
2. Secondly, a vision brings **clarity**.
3. Thirdly, a vision carries with it a sense of **moral conviction**. Anyone who is a “vision caster” will tell you this is not merely something that could be done; this is something that should be done.

According to Stanley,

A Vision weaves four things into the fabric of our daily experience:

- a. Vision evokes emotions
- b. Vision provides motivation
- c. Vision sets direction
- d. Vision translates purpose.

People who have a vision are always discovering new, fresh, creative, innovative ways to do ministry. People who have “vision” are passionate by the many opportunities that are presented. Bill Hybel author of “Courageous

Leadership,” states without vision, people lose the vitality that makes them feel alive.

As we turn our attention to the text, Habakkuk was a unique prophet. He had an uncanny way in asking God questions. Most prophets delivered the message from God; but Habakkuk liked to debate with God. When you read the text closely Habakkuk’s most pressing question to God was – why does evil in Judah go unpunished. Habakkuk was troubled by the sins he saw in Judah despite the religious revival. Interestingly, the Lord commands Habakkuk to write the vision.

In the Church, we have a responsibility to develop and implement the vision because we want to leave a legacy for the future. A “vision” will come alive once it is shared. During my Chat and Chews, I shared this concept developed by Thomas Rainer:

Leader’s passion + congregation + community needs = A shared Vision.

According to Rainer when the

Leader’s passion + congregation + community needs; interestingly where they intersect, is where God speaks.

The text states, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time. But at the end, it will speak and it will not lie.” The appointed time is God’s time. As an annual conference, it is time for us to seize the moment!

From 2012 to 2016, God used Bishop Young Jin Cho to cast the vision of prayer. For the last four years, you have been learning, re-learning and practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer. Prayer is hard work and sets in motion the vision to come forth. I firmly believe that the greatest gift that Bishop Cho left me was having this annual conference in the face of God preparing the way for the new vision.

After much prayer, discernment, sharing and compiling the data of the 32 sessions

Our ministry vision for the Virginia Annual Conference is to be **“Disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve.**

Lifelong Learners --- Influencers – Servants (Repeat 3x)

All United Methodist Churches in Virginia will have a process of intentionally forming disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by your influence and your act of servanthood by 2020.

Beloved the Bible undergirds our ministry vision.

And Jesus came and said to them, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and teaching them

to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people. (Matthew 4:19)

“Then Jesus said, to his disciples, “whoever wants to be my disciples must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

Virginia Conference – Can You See It?

Lifelong Learners – Influencers – Servants

Beloved, when we give Jesus Christ His rightful place as Lord of our lives, His lordship will be expressed in the way we serve others.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” (I Peter 4:10)

“Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)

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Can You See It – And if you cannot we will work on it for the next 4 years!

