

## What's Next?

*Discuss, Discern, Decide for Post Covid-19*  
Vision Document (April 2021)

"The way of trust is a movement into obscurity..." Brennan Manning

What's next as we start to see the horizon of a post-Covid 19 world? As with tens of thousands of other churches, we are wrestling with a number of questions. What do we need to build back? What lessons have we learned? What new dynamics are in play? What are the opportunities and difficulties?

We recognize that many of us are feeling tired, anxious, and weary. In others words, we just wish this would all be over. But it isn't. Our call is how to carry each other's burdens and cast our cares upon the Lord (1 Peter 5:7).

In this visioning document we want you to join the conversation within our faith community. We want to create space in this time for us to discuss the issues at hand. We want to seek discernment in a prayerful manner, leaning heavily on the Spirit's guidance. We want to discover all of the pertinent facts that will inform us. We also want to be patient and loving with each other as we move forward to make decisions. These decisions have to be made in order for us to continue in the mission of leading people to follow Jesus, love God, and love others.

Welcome to the journey of trusting in the faithfulness of Jesus to His Church.

### Framing Statements

In this document we will first examine some of our key assumptions. We also want to look at how we want to break down ministry in the next 12 months.

1. **We want to make plans for just the next 12 months:**
  - a. The next four months, including June, July, August, and September,
  - b. The fall, winter, and spring of 2021-2022, when we anticipate a shift as we move toward herd immunity.
  - c. This is for now, not forever.
2. **We know that maintaining three in-person services along with a digital, online service, is not sustainable.**
3. **We are experiencing, as we re-engage our volunteers, that not everyone is ready to come back at the same time in the same way.** For example, some volunteers have already told us that they will not be returning until we have achieved herd immunity. Others, especially in these summer months, want the freedom to take advantage of travelling, which they haven't experienced in over a year.
4. **We are called to feed and protect.** As pastors, another word for shepherds, we are mandated by Scripture to feed and protect the flock. Therefore, the safety of our congregation is one of our priorities in the midst of discussing in-person options.
5. **We are committed to exploring the missional/pastoral impact of a dynamic, digital, online service.** Digital gives us the ability to aggregate people unrestricted by

location. We see this as an opportunity that we can leverage with our older adults and shut-ins, and the younger generations that are seeking spiritual answers.

### **Part One - The next 4 months (June - September)**

So what's next for TJC in the next four months? The reason we are asking this question, as we think of June to September, is because public health is informing us that most people will be fully vaccinated by the end of this time.

But what do we do in between? This is what we see:

- A. **We Experiment:** We recognize that we are moving into a warmer season that allows for easier outdoor gatherings which allows us to encourage fellowship. For example, Pastor Sarah of Children and Family ministries, is looking at having some outdoor, in person gatherings for children & families (possibility of an Athletes in Action camp). We also recognize outdoor, in person gatherings that can apply to older adult, young adult, men's, and women's events as well.
- B. **We Evangelize:** This summer the regular Tidal Impact mission tour event for youth is not taking place (where youth from different churches from across Atlantic Canada congregate in one city to do neighborhood ministry). Instead, a new event is being promoted, *Undercurrent*, where local churches are being encouraged to make partnerships with other agencies and groups in their neighborhood and do ministry in Jesus' name. We are planning to engage in this initiative and hoping to make it an intergenerational experience here at TJC.
- C. **We Enter into Rest:** We recognize our paid and unpaid staff, our key volunteers, and our entire church family need to take advantage of resting in our short summer season. If the possibility of the Atlantic Bubble opens up in the near future, or other travelling possibilities, many of us will want to take advantage of this. It would be wise to keep our plans for this summer simple so that all of us can rest and be sharp for what comes next.
- D. **We Engage:** Another question is what will worship services look like in this season? Answering this question has a number of layers.
  - a. **Digital/Online:** We are committed to a weekly, online, service experience. We will maintain an ongoing online engagement, encouragement, and edification for our community. We see our online, digital presence continuing to evolve as we determine how to effectively engage in this technological space.

One key learning we have right now is that a ***digital service needs to make the viewer the primary target***, not simply looking in on a live service. As one person quipped, a lot of services make you feel like you're watching from the children's table, or in other words, you're still the outsider looking in.

Presently, we believe our higher level of engagement with the online service is because we are making the viewer the priority.

- b. **In-Person Gatherings:** Our leadership team has been looking at possible pathways to create effective, missional, and pastoral worship gatherings. As we look at this there are some different factors that make a huge impact:
- i. The ever-changing management of health guidelines for everyone's safety.
  - ii. The availability of volunteers from our church family who are available and willing to show up and help. Otherwise, baseline ministry cannot happen (hospitality, worship teams, debit machines, children, etc...).
  - iii. The equipping and training of volunteers during this in-between time.

Based on this, we are **declaring our recommendation** for the summer: **We are designating one campus for weekly, in-person gatherings and one campus for an online service.**

Therefore, practically, we want to start in June with the Riverview Campus as our in-person location and the Allison Campus as our digital, online site. Anyone from TJC who wants an in-person experience for the summer, we look forward to seeing you at RC. Depending upon demand and other dynamics, we will make adjustments accordingly.

## Part Two: Fall/Winter/Spring 2021-2022

In a recent podcast with Cary Nieuhoff and Rick Warren, Rick talks about the loss our wider culture has experienced and the loss people in our church family have experienced. There is a prediction of a **coming tsunami of grief** as a result of everything people have come through. People have experienced upsetment, delays, loss of graduations, jobs, family connections, and loss of loved ones. Therefore, we have to acknowledge the emotional pain people will encounter in this coming year of our church life. We still don't know all of the implications of this.

We also don't want **to waste a good crisis**. We have seen the power of technology. We have seen, even here at TJC, our footprint of witness and influence increase during this time. We suspect that more people have encountered the gospel, been able to hear it, and "look in on it" more than ever before. For example, on our Easter weekend, between our online views and restricted in-person gatherings, we estimate that there were well over 1,000 interactions with our Easter weekend events. That kind of impact a year ago would have been unthinkable!

Historically, the **Christian church has flourished during trials and it has flourished when it embraced new technologies**. In the second century, during the Augustinian pandemic, Christians practiced hospitality and care in such a way that led to what we now know as hospitals. The advent of new technology opened new opportunities for the Gospel. Because of the Guetenburg press, the Bible was printed and widely spread and led to the Reformation. Billy Graham used the technology of radio with his *Hour of Decision* and showing crusades on TV. The opportunity for the church in today's world of Zoom, digital

services, and social media, means the footprint of the church's witness and ministry is almost limitless.

With that in mind, what are some of the **big rocks** that we need to address for this fall, winter, and spring of 2021-22?

One key issue is **VOLUNTEERS**. How quickly will we build our teams back? How comfortable will everyone be coming back? How will this impact specific ministries, such as Journey Kids on Sunday mornings, or worship teams, or hospitality teams? Thinking extremely positively means that everyone will respond with an enthusiastic YES right after Labour Day weekend. But realism suggests that it's likely going to be more incremental and engagement of volunteers may prove to be challenging. We will need to come up with a re-engagement strategy for this coming year of ministry.

Another key issue is our **STAFFING** for next gen ministries. The departure of Micah Knowles, our Associate of Youth and Young Adults, has left a large hole on our team of leadership. We will need to come up with transition staff to address opportunities and needs starting this summer and navigating the fall/winter/spring. At the same time, we will need to form a search team to begin looking for a long-term, permanent replacement for pastoral leadership for youth and young adults. We believe there are good opportunities to leverage during this time of change, but seeing who will get involved and be a part of the next gen team is critical for there to be an ongoing impact.

One more key issue is the strategic use of our **CAMPUSES**. We feel a tension between our resources and what is missionally strategic in order for us to share the gospel and be a light in our community.

What are the possible pathways? As we re-imagine our spaces let's consider the following:

**Pathway 1:**

We could go back to what we did before (3 in-person services, no digital), but we will miss out on all of the opportunities we have discovered and we still have to deal with the challenge of re-engaging our volunteers. *(Our leadership does not see this as a good creative, missional, and pastoral approach in a post-Covid world.)*

**Pathway 2:**

We re-engage two campuses for in-person services and continue to invest in a digital studio. We repurpose one campus to become a digital studio - for this coming year. *(Our leadership team is favoring this pathway in a post-Covid world.)*

**Pathway 3:**

Perhaps there is another way we don't yet see. There are likely other great, creative, missional, and pastoral approaches on how we can use our three campuses. *(As leadership we certainly need to be open to listening to new ideas in a post-Covid world.)*

## Conclusion: We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight (2 Cor 5:7)

Faith tells us that God our Father is always at work. It has felt, in some ways, like things are at a standstill during this pandemic season but God has been active in drawing people to him and working in the lives of his people. We recognize that this past year plus has exposed certain things:

- We cannot take our need for fellowship for granted.
- The necessity for deepening our own spiritual roots so we are prepared to face times of testing.
- People are able to adapt and embrace new technologies and new ways of behaving.
- The challenge of living in uncertainty together and that loving God and loving your neighbor is still the call of faith.

Ultimately this time about trusting in God to guide and provide. At the top of this document was a brief quote by Brennan Manning. That extract was taken from this larger quote in which he talks about ruthlessly trusting God.

The way of trust is a movement into obscurity, into the undefined, into ambiguity, not into some predetermined, clearly delineated plan for the future. The next step discloses itself only out of a discernment of God acting in the desert of the present moment. The reality of naked trust is the life of the pilgrim who leaves what is nailed down, obvious, and secure, and walks into the unknown without any rational explanation to justify the decision or guarantee the future. Why? Because God has signaled the movement and offered it his presence and his promise. — **Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God***

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### Next Steps

So what's next? Now that you've read this vision document take time to pray and to reflect on the decisions and steps of action that the leadership and our church as a whole are facing. We are planning a **Town Hall discussion on Wednesday, May 19th**. Our goal is to make it accessible by Zoom and there will be limited seating you can register for.

Grace and peace,  
The Senior Leadership Team