

# *Life at the Father's House*

## **OUR HISTORY**

The Father's House conducted its first official church service on March 2, 1997. Prior to their "launching," a small group (a dozen or so) were meeting for prayer and worship at the Martinelli Ranch on Bucktown Road. Pastor Dave and Donna were in the middle of a six-month break after serving at their previous church in Concord for ten years. They were waiting for God's clear direction for their lives and His ministry through them. It was during this season that it became clear the Holy Spirit was upon their small group and the circumstances that led them to Vacaville were no coincidence. They were being "set up" to begin one of the greatest adventures of their lives.

During an intense time of seeking the Lord concerning this major decision to plant a church, the Lord spoke to Pastor Dave, clearly, to "Build a House for His Glory and Keep It Simple!" With this word of the Lord and the blessing of their home church, they began their simple plans to start The Father's House.

Open doors and confirmations followed quickly. The church moved from the Patterson's living room to an elementary school, then to the community center. After growing to 900 in number, and three services, God opened the door to purchase the current facility where we have just started a fifth weekend service. (four English, one in Spanish). We also have opened our first satellite campus in Napa. Now as we begin our second decade we continue to grow as we seek God and plan for the future.

We are grateful for our history, yet continue to live in the present and anticipate the future. As God continues to add people and vision, we realize that "our story" is still being written. Pastor Dave believes that long after we are gone history will record that there was a church in Vacaville, California that was known for the presence of God, and that it radically impacted their culture, their city, their nation, and a generation!

Let's see what God will do next... it's exciting stuff!!

## **OUR DISTINCTIVES**

### **(WHAT WE ARE ABOUT)**

**Churches, like people, are all unique.** "Identical twins" are very rare indeed. Because the church is composed of individuals who are each uniquely created and have been influenced by such widely diverse experience, the corporate expression of those individuals within the local church is unique as well. No two churches are quite the same. Much like you and I, every church is a special blend of gifts, talents, temperaments, experiences, preferences, passions and divine callings. Although our Doctrine may be the same, the "personality" of one

church may widely differ from another, despite the fact that **the same great commission employs both.**

We'd like to give you an opportunity to get acquainted with The Father's House and to better understand who we are, what we are like, and the distinctives and values that are shaping our "personality". Only as you really get to know us, will you be able to properly determine whether or not The Father's House is the best place for you to "get planted" and reach your fullest potential in the Kingdom of God.

**We are continually in a process of becoming** what God has called us to be and develop into the full stature of Christ. The following are a few more foundational values that we will build upon and we hold as imperative in our life as a body of believers:

1. **The Word of God (all of it!)** is honored as the ultimate authority in all matters of doctrine and behavior.
2. We honor the **perfect and complete work of Christ's death, resurrection, and present ministry** and believe it is our responsibility to present "His Ministry".
3. **Prayer** is a constant focus and top priority.
4. **Reaching** those who are without hope and in need of our Savior is the continual gauge, by which we will measure our progress.
5. **Becoming a disciple** is strongly emphasized (i.e. A fully devoted, follower of Christ), and we value faithfulness and commitment to the cause of Christ and to the Church family.
6. We encourage a **zealous devotion to the things of God**, the House of God, and the people of God that may be viewed as a bit "non-traditional."
7. **Responsible stewardship** is encouraged in the following areas:
  - Our Time
  - Our Talents
  - Our Treasures (*Finances*)
8. We believe in the development and function of **Team Ministry**, not the "one man show."
9. We believe that **every member is a minister**, and honor servanthood.
10. We strive to unleash the full potential of the church body by **equipping** every individual to use their gifts and talents in the Kingdom business.
11. **Serving** the needs of the church and the community is a vitally important mandate.
12. We cultivate a "**world view**" of the **Kingdom of God** and strive to promote harmony and cooperation between Christians from other backgrounds, cultures, denominations, and traditions. We realize that we are only a part of what God desires to do through His Bride in this city.

13. **Christ-like character and integrity** are held in high regard – more than giftedness, talents, or personal charisma.
14. **Christ-honoring relationships** are continually cultivated, especially in the marriage and family. We encourage men and women to excel in Godly leadership, responsibility in the home, church, and community.
15. **Our children** are a top priority. Youth and children’s ministries are important to the entire body.
16. **Praise and worship are a major part of every gathering.** We believe strongly in worshipping with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This may often break the “boundaries” of religious tradition (even our own) and may include dancing, shouting, bowing, kneeling, stillness and a host of other Biblical expressions.
17. We value the **power of the Holy Spirit** and the manifest or “felt presence” of the Spirit of God.
18. We respect tradition, but **honor no “sacred cows!”**
19. We love to have a good time and value **hospitality and genuine friendships.** We encourage the building of new relationships and the maintaining of old ones.
20. We believe that God has called us to **significance and influence** in our generation. We are not here to be spectators and neither are you.

## **CORE VALUES**

1. Presence-Driven **Worship**
2. **Equipping** through preaching and teaching
3. Consistent **prayer**
4. Relationships through life-giving **small groups**
5. **Missions** - both local and global
6. **City Impact** - serving the needs of our community

As we invest our lives in these six core values with a spirit of **excellence** and **generosity**, we believe God will continue to build a strong local church that will make a difference.

# MISSION STATEMENT

**Our Mission is to effectively use all available resources and means to:**

1. Advance the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43)
2. Influence unbelievers to believe (trust) in Christ
3. Influence believers to become fully-devoted followers of Christ (Disciples)
4. Build a house for His Glory! (Ephesians 2:21-22)

## **MISSION OBJECTIVES:**

1. **Reach** our city and region with the Gospel of Christ
2. **Restore** people from the consequences of sin
3. **Release** people into ministry as they are equipped
4. **Realize** (to make actual, and obtain) the Presence and Power God in our generation.

**MISSION SCOPE:** Our city, our region and the nations (Acts 1:8)

We are asking for an ever-increasing world-view for the harvest as God increases the effectiveness and strength of our home base.

# MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY

## (OPINIONS AND PREFERENCES)

**PHILOSOPHY:** The general beliefs, concepts and ATTITUDES of an individual or a group.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

It is commonly accepted among many of those who have experience in trouble-shooting church feuds, crises or splits that a very large percentage of such **problems arise from differences of OPINION** or conflicting preferences, rather than from significant doctrinal differences.

Most genuine Christians agree on the basic under-pinning of faith but often questions, disagreements, and **divisive controversies arise from peripheral issues, personal preferences, methodology, and differing PERSPECTIVES.**

While **it is our intention to “MAJOR ON MAJORS and minor on minors,”** we also feel that it is necessary to address certain matters of “secondary” doctrine and of our philosophy of ministry in order **to maintain a spirit of unity and peace within the Church family. (Eph. 4:3)**

**The importance of this harmony of thought** or philosophy (the general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or a group), is underscored by the Apostle’s letter to the Church at Corinth:

“I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same **thing** and that **there are no divisions** among you, but that you **are perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.** (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Scripture places much emphasis on the **importance of harmonious agreement**, and the **danger of division** (literally “two visions”). We want you to know our perspective on the following issues so that you can **be careful to avoid any divisive philosophies, perspectives, or personal preferences.**

1. **We believe in unlimited vision!** That means that we are never going to settle or be satisfied with where we are. In just over 10 years we have grown to around 3000 and we are just getting started. As long as there are unsaved people in our county and nations to be reached, our job is not done! Unlimited vision means we have not set any limits on what God wants to do through our church. The size and scope of our influence is ultimately in the hands of the Lord but we are not going to limit the possibilities.
2. **Whatever is alive grows!** I’ve heard many people say, “The church is getting too big; I wish we could stay small and intimate”. The way that we stay intimate and develop long-term relationships is through small groups and by ministering to others. If you are a part of The Father’s House, you are going to be a part of a large church. This is not pride or some grandiose need to be the biggest and best. We simply believe that if we are bringing the best news in the world (the Gospel) and lives are being changed, that we will continually grow. Our vision is to begin to plant churches in the coming years and those churches will grow to a level where they can influence their city and region.
3. We believe that **the family of God at “The Father’s House” is worth protecting** from negative or injurious influences such as: perpetration of **heresy (false teaching); malicious gossip** or a contentious or **divisive attitude**; gross dereliction toward **domestic/family responsibilities**; blatant disregard for scriptural guidelines regarding sexual relationships; adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pornography; etc. When we become aware of these and other spiritual conditions, **we will attempt to bring guidance and correction at the level the individual is willing to submit to.** There can only be the exercise of true spiritual authority where there is submission and a desire for change by the one living in sin. We intend to handle all such matters as outlined in Matthew 18:15-20:

**Note:** Each step of this process is meant to bring the errant person to **true repentance**, upon which Christian fellowship is to be completely and immediately restored. This process of confrontation and accountability depends upon the level of commitment of the individual. Anyone in any condition is welcome to come to the church. It is when an individual begins to identify with The Father’s House and establish relationships that the accountability process begins. When people desire to be trained for ministry and step out into leadership positions the requirements and levels of confrontation increase accordingly.

4. **We believe in the exercise of “charismatic” gifts** as evident in the New Testament church. **We also value the experience of praying “in the Spirit,”** or in “unknown languages.” We also believe that the exercise of any such spiritual gift should be subject to the **prudent evaluation** of the eldership of the church and should always be expressed in a way that is **sincere, unpretentious, and beneficial** to the rest of the church family.
5. We believe the application of 1 Corinthians 14:40 is the responsibility of the pastors of every local church. This chapter is dealing with the exercise of all of the gifts of the Spirit during the corporate gathering of the church.  
**1 Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”**
6. While we do not reject the possible benefits of psychological therapies, twelve-step programs or support groups, **we believe that the power of the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the blood of Christ Jesus is the only and ultimate solution** to the devastating consequences of sin upon the human soul. We do believe in recovery groups, counseling and going through a process of restoration with the bottom line being: only by coming to the cross will we be made whole!
7. We believe that **God’s intention for marriage is “one man with one wife for life!”** We very **seldom condone divorce**, and never condone remarriage unless the broken marriage is not **reconcilable FROM GOD’S POINT OF VIEW**. We understand that we live in a society where divorce is very common in the church and even in ministry, but we are committed to give marital counsel according to New Testament parameters.
8. We believe that the **“Great Commission”** found in Matthew 28:18-20 is for today and it is more than a slogan or concept. We take our responsibilities to the nations quite seriously and invest a large amount of our money, time, people and passion in the area of missions. Church planting, orphanages, crusades, seminars and short-term missions trips are a continual focus of our church Body.
9. Although we want everyone to feel welcome and enjoy their visit at The Father’s House, we have come to the realization that our weekend church services are **not designed for the spectator or casual inquirer**. The time we spend in worship and in the Word is primarily a “believers meeting.” That means the worship style and duration may be a stretch for those who are new. Again, our desire is not to exclude anyone, but we believe that the Church must behave like the Spirit-filled Body of Christ we are. Then, those who are hungry for God will see the reality and beauty in what we do.
10. **We believe in and practice “cultural relevance.”** This means we are consciously attempting to reach this generation with methods and communication styles that they can relate to. Because of this, you will notice that the music style, volume, lighting, design of the sanctuary, style of the communicators and financial investments are made to reach the un-churched and those who are in there teens, twenties and thirties. This does not mean that we do not have a heart or desire to minister to the middle aged or elderly.

I happen to be one of those! People who attend The Father's House who are in their sixties and seventies are young at heart and enjoy or have learned how to be connected to a church without religious tradition.

11. **It is not about us!** We believe that our congregation is only a part of the "Church in Vacaville." Only as we embrace our **call to unity with other "life-giving" churches**, will we advance the message of Christ and His Word in our city and region. Our desire is to see denominational walls destroyed and we will make visible and tangible efforts to support other ministries and develop a "co-laborer" mentality instead of competition. We are praying that we will be able to embrace "**God's Vision**" for this area. Our efforts and plans as a local church must always be examined in the light of the following questions:

- Are we advancing the Kingdom of God?
- Are we reaching the lost?
- Are we making disciples?
- Are we a blessing to other churches in our area?
- Are we blessing our city?
- Are we reaching out in mission with a world-view?
- Will our efforts, today, make a difference in someone's eternity?

## **TITHES and OFFERINGS**

The Father's House believes that the collection, handling, and disbursing of all tithes and offerings must be handled in a **manner that brings glory to God**.

In as much that this church has been entrusted as a steward of these gifts, The Father's House will ensure that the collection and counting of these funds will always involve at least two individuals, one of which will be an accountant or full-time administrator of the church. Strict accounting will always be required and records produced to ensure that each gift (including cash where possible) is properly credited to the giver. Realizing that **giving is a heart issue** between the believer and our God, The Father's House will ensure that the number of individuals allowed to view these records will be kept as minimal as possible to ensure confidentiality of the gifts.

**Our church believes in financial accountability** and will make available to each member a copy of the financial report at year-end or upon request. All purchases, leases, or agreements of major import are made by the plurality of elders after prayerful consideration and analysis. Day-to-day operational expenses will be made by the church staff as needed. Our desire is that the gifts received will be used with godly wisdom in areas that will further the Kingdom of God.