

Mission, Vision, Values Reset February 25, 2026

Something needed to be done. We stood in the kitchen at church, wondering, “What makes Christus Victor relevant?” It was a casual conversation with the senior pastor and the music director and me, but the tone was ever so serious. We didn’t know. The budget was critically slim. Attendance was dropping. We were in a transitory moment in time. I took that as my invitation to get to work as an *internal consultant*, not hired for that specific role, but interested in where it could lead.

In Spring of 2020, the congregation and I *together entered into a kind of contractual agreement*, (Block, 2023) which began when I was asked to plan and lead the annual staff/council leadership retreat. There, we learned about and engaged in discussion on how to create a strategy to lead the congregation to intentional, missional living. This interaction helped leaders begin to see how our individual calls to follow Christ do not *remove us* from daily life, but instead *transform* the attitudes and understandings we have of the situations in which we find ourselves (Kolden, 1983). We would *begin to build a new possibility* for Christus Victor together. It was now time to move into the *discovery phase* (Block, 2023). We would *seek to develop a fresh perspective* on Christus Victor’s mission question, as well as *create a process to mobilize action*. Following the retreat, I led a diverse working group through a framework that allowed for more specific definition of the congregation’s visionary elements. Members of the working group were open enough to have deep and heartfelt discussions, and when the group was finished with its work, its findings were written up and presented to council. This group determined that one of the key elements in moving forward into a more missional lifestyle (that is, into living out one’s Christian vocation, doing works for one’s neighbor in all of our relationships, situations, contexts and involvements) was to have a concrete plan for discipleship. This propelled us to search for a way to help the congregation, not only grow in their own understandings of faith and mission, but to potentially guide people around them to be open for this, also. Through our discovery, we learned that the *presenting problem* of Christus Victor’s mission had a lot to do with *where people were in their faith lives, both as individuals and as a body of believers*. Our small working group in its *discovery* blossomed into a congregational *whole-system discovery process* (Block, 2023). It was extremely exciting, and people were engaged.

We brought on *external consultant* Pastor Greg Finke, of Dwelling 1:14, who helped us recognize and be open for how Jesus is already on the move in our neighborhoods, and then to participate in that mission by building sustainable relationships with people in our local neighborhood communities. The congregation read books and discussed them together. We engaged in a preaching series. Weekly worship would become a support for what we were doing out in our communities. Then, for the 6 months to follow, we had regular check-in navigation sessions with Pastor Finke.

We experienced some *resistance* as we were going through Finke’s book. Not everyone was ready to step into their faith in such a radical way. Some just couldn’t participate, as we were

in the middle of a pandemic. But, through it all, Christus Victor learned that God is not done with us. The body of believers experienced that God is on the move within the Christus Victor community and beyond its walls in the neighborhoods of the people that attend here and visit here. The community learned that God is calling us to participate alongside Jesus in greater mission than ever before. We discovered that by listening to what God is doing, we can participate in launching creative ministries to help more people love Jesus. We learned that the purpose of the church of Jesus Christ is *not* to grow bigger, do more, or have larger influence, but the point is that we are *Christians of the cross*, that our ministry starts there, with Jesus. That means we come alongside the marginalized to make the world a better place. It means that we help people find and follow Jesus, so that they may live joy-filled, meaningful lives. It means we graciously deny ourselves and serve our neighbors.

Soon, it became apparent that we needed to begin to financially support the Joining Jesus initiative. God was leading Christus Victor to do more good. We had then reached the *engagement and implementation phase* of our work together (Block, 2023). We formed a *Dream Team*, which further solidified our motion forward. Among other offerings, this team created a one-page document, describing the congregation's mission, vision and values and including all ministries current and hoped for. Out of that team's work grew the *City on a Hill initiative*, which would serve as the means by which Joining Jesus would be supported financially. Through this initiative, we held congregational *listening sessions* (which led to a draft of our strategic priorities) and *leadership retreats*, we *created our visionary logo*, and we delivered *sermons* on where this community was seeing God leading. Soon, *Christus Victor's vision was a dialogue, a conversation* in which *high standards* were being set, both for individuals and the community. It was evident that *people had faith in each other and trusted one another*.

Many joined the *City on a Hill* movement to give us a jumpstart into 2023! We came out strong, not only financially, but through our newly-revamped strategic priorities, in the ways that we communicate both internally and externally, through our new staff positions, and in our understanding of who we are as good stewards of all the great gifts that God has given us. *City on a Hill* was woven into the fabric of all that we do at Christus Victor, and the congregation is continually *learning from the whole process* (Block, 2023), seeking to hone its priorities and keep them operating from a fresh perspective for the next phase of our new future together.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid." Matthew 5:14

References

Block, P. (2023). *Flawless Consulting: A guide to getting your expertise used (4th ed.)*. Hoboken:

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Kolden, Marc. (1983). Luther on Vocation. *Word & World, Vol. 3*, pages 382-390.

