



THE FUTURE STORY

Of

Evergreen Christian Church

Presented June 1, 2014 during Worship

A Two Act Play

By: The Spiritual Strategic Journey Organizing Team with major contributions from SSJ Triads.

THE FUTURE STORY Of Evergreen Christian Church

Written in the Spring of 2014 for the year of 2020

Draft V - A

This “Future Story” is a snap shot of the congregation in the year 2020. It attempts to answer the question of “what type of church is God calling Evergreen Christian Church to be by the year 2020”. Upon adoption of “The Future Story” we will then begin working on the strategic plan of how we will arrive at this future destination.

Scripture Foundations of the Future Story

Acts 1: 8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 2: 42:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.

Colossians 3: 12-17

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Entertaining Angels: A Two Act Play

By: Spiritual Strategic Journey Organizing Team with Major Contributions from the SSJ Triads
(*& With apologies to Wm. Paul Young, author of "The Shack".*)

Scriptural Reference for Theme of the Play

Hebrews 13: 2

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it."

Setting: Heaven's Board Room

Date: June 1, 2020

Cast: God the Father
God the Son (Jesus)
God the Holy Spirit
Albert: Angel One
Beatrice: Angel Two

Note: All underlined text reflects our Core Values.

ACT I: The Assignment

Stage: Round table with three lit candles on the table. Three chairs.

Enter: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father takes a seat, with Jesus and the Holy Spirit milling around.

God the Father: Jesus and the Holy Spirit, would you please take your seats so we can begin our meeting today.

(The Holy Spirit takes the seat to the Right Hand of God the Father.)

Jesus: (exasperated) Holy Spirit, you are hovering over my seat again!

Holy Spirit: Oh. Sorry. I keep forgetting. *(They change seats.)*

Jesus: *(to the congregation)* After all eternity you would think she would know that I sit on the right hand of God the Father.

God the Father: Let's call this meeting to order. Today is June 1, 2020. Thank me for coming today. Today we are gathered to assess how our church is doing in the state of Colorado. First on our agenda are the churches of the mountain communities in the foothills west of Denver.

Jesus: Father, we have been hearing from those who have been knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door that there is one particular church in the community that is alive and well with our love and grace. Let's see, I have the name here somewhere. *(pulling out his I-Pad or Smart Phone)* O yes, here it is. It is called "The Evergreen Christian Church".

Holy Spirit: Indeed, the living breath of our spirit seems to be filling the people of that church. I too have been hearing nothing but glowing reports. As directed in the book of Acts, they indeed have been devoting themselves to the teachings of the apostles, to good Christian fellowship, to their worship and communion, and to prayer. And like the early church, they have been our witness not only in their mountain communities, but also in Denver, Colorado, and beyond to the entire world.

Jesus: Yes. Evidently, several years ago when a "Rev. Miller" came to serve as Pastor, they adopted a set of "Core Values" that have been guiding their life and ministry together. Then a couple of years later they discerned and captured a vision for their ministry by utilizing a process called "A Spiritual Strategic Journey".

God the Father: Well, that is very interesting. I think I would like to know more. Perhaps this calls for a little more investigating. Let us send our top two investigative angels, Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice, to pay them a visit. Jesus, would you please summon Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice to come into our presence?

Jesus: *(Yelling in a Loud Voice)* **Hey, Beatrice and Albert, Come Quick. The Lord God Almighty Want To See You Pronto!**

God the Father: Thanks, but I could have done that.

(((Enter Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice)))

Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice *(together):* Did you call, Oh most Holy One – uh—we mean, O most Holy Ones -- Or is it, Most Holy One.

Angel Albert: *(Speaking To The Congregation)* We never know how to address all three of them together.

God the Father: Never mind. You are our two best investigative angels. We want you to pay a trip to Evergreen, Colorado, and particularly to the Evergreen Christian Church. We have been hearing from those knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door that there are some really wonderful things going on in that congregation.

Angel Albert: Oh, we would love to. Maybe we can get some hiking in while.....

God the Father: Angels, don't interrupt. Angels, we want you to pay a visit to both the church and the community. Stay incognito. Look for the signs of our presence.

Angel Beatrice: What should we be looking for?

God the Father: Good question. Let's see.....

Jesus: (*with enthusiasm*) Oh...Oh...Oh... I know. I want to know how this church is taking care of the least of these, my brothers and sisters. How are they being my hands and feet and voice in their communities? How are they loving and caring for each other in their church? How do they resolve any differences among them so that the focus stays on sharing my Gospel? I especially want to know how they are helping people grow as my Disciples and how they are encouraging them to apply their faith to their daily living.

Holy Spirit: And I too have some interest. I want to know how my Spirit is moving through the lives of those in the church. How are their prayer and devotional lives? Is my fruit visibly present among them: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Gentleness, Self-Control, Generosity, and Faithfulness? And how is that fruit being manifested in the lives of their membership and shared with the community? How are their Spiritual Gifts and Passions being used to strengthen the church?

God the Father: And I am interested in how we are being praised in worship. But also, because I am a “creative God”, I want to know how they have creatively organized themselves for ministry. What programs are taking place? And, of course, how are they evangelizing their neighborhoods and spreading my son’s Gospel.

Jesus: Thank you, Papa.

God the Father: Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice, that is your assignment. Report back to us in one week. Get along now.

Angel Albert: (As they walk away) Beatrice, what does “incognito” mean?

Angel Beatrice: It means to not let them know you are an angel. Just let them think you are a stranger in their midst.

Angel Albert: Oh. This is going to be fun.

END OF ACT ONE

Intermission:

Congregational Song: “The Church’s One Foundation”

ACT II: The Report

Setting: Heaven's Board Room

Date: (One Week Later)

Cast: Same as Act One

Enter: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit tries to sit at the right hand of God the Father again, but Jesus beats her to the chair, with a playful smirk on his face.)

God the Father: Let us call our meeting back to order again. Our first agenda item is to hear the report from Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice concerning the good things we have been hearing about the Evergreen Christian Church in Evergreen, CO. from those who have been knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door. Jesus, would you summon.....no. Holy Spirit, would you summon Angel Beatrice and Angel Albert?

((The Holy Spirit gently rings a little bell. Angel Beatrice and Angel Albert enter.))

Angel Albert. We are once again honored to be in your presence most Holy One, I mean Most Holy Ones, I mean.....

God the Father: *(interrupting)* Never mind. We would like to receive your report concerning the Evergreen Christian Church.

Angel Beatrice: Most holy ones, we indeed found a church that is alive and well with your unconditional love, your gentle spirit, and your freely given grace.

Angel Albert: Indeed, as you will discover in our report, at Evergreen Christian Church, Jesus the Christ is being proclaimed as Lord and Savior in all that we saw and heard. The proclamation of the Gospel was witnessed in their worship, their educational events, their fellowship, their outreach, and even in their organizational structure. You would have been warmly pleased.

Angel Beatrice: And while the scriptures are being taught and the gospel proclaimed, those in the church are given the freedom and the responsibility to interpret your word as your Spirit guides them. In keeping with their historic understanding of "No Creed but Christ", their members keep Christ at the center of their church, but do not let non-essential beliefs divide them. The phrase "In matters of faith, unity, in matters of opinion, liberty, in all things, love" is alive and well in the church.

Holy Spirit: Angels, later in your report we want you to share some specific things that you saw. Obviously in this church our children are putting their faith into action and they are doing a lot of good works. But before we hear about that, I am interested in what you discovered to be at the foundation of all of their ministries and activities.

Angel Beatrice: Holy Spirit, as Angel Albert said, first they have a deep commitment to the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. But we discovered another commitment that set

them apart, and that is their commitment to individual spiritual growth. It is simply unparalleled. They understand that people who are growing in the Fruit of your Spirit (in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) also grow into people who are willing and eager to give of themselves to others in ministries. In other words, “making and growing disciples” is a high priority in the congregation.

God the Father: Well, I like what I hear so far. But let’s get to some specifics. Details! I want details!

Angel Albert: Yes, O Holy One. Our first encounter with the church was on Sunday morning. We didn’t even get to the front door before people were warmly greeting us. It was obvious that the ministry of hospitality is very important to the congregation. Before we even entered the sanctuary we felt that this was a place of physical, emotional, and spiritual safety.

Angel Beatrice: O, Father God, in their worship service you indeed were being praised in both song and spirit. There was an infectious joy and care present that permeated the whole service. Like their building, their worship was a nice blend of young and old, traditional and new. We counted 125 children, youth, and adults. Like their community, those in retirement or close to retirement were the largest group, but they also had several families with young children and youth, enough that they had two or three Children’s Church classes taking place during the worship service. Their wonderful pianist, Jeanine Armstrong, was accompanied by some high-school youth on a variety of instruments. Before worship I overheard one couple sharing that they were first introduced to the church during a summer weekly outdoor worship service the church held at DeDisse Park overlooking Evergreen Lake. Another couple chimed in and shared that they appreciated the intimate prayer and worship services that various members host at the ski-slopes on Saturday evenings during the winter.

Angel Albert: It turns out, O most Holy Ones, that we attended on the perfect Sunday. It just happened to be their “MINISTRY, MISSION, and DISCIPLESHIP DAY.” It was a day devoted to encouraging and helping people understand and get involved in their various internal church ministries, their external outreach ministries, and their spiritual growth and discipleship opportunities. It seems that for several weeks before this day everyone was encouraged to be in prayer about their Spiritual Gifts and Passions, and how their Gifts and Passions could be used to strengthen the work of the church in Mission, Ministry, and to help themselves and others to grow spiritually.

Angel Beatrice: Oh, it was really cool. Pastor Miller’s sermon that day was on Spiritual Gifts and Passions. He challenged everyone to become involved in three areas of church – an internal church ministry, an external outreach ministry, and a spiritual growth discipleship small group. After the worship service everyone went upstairs for a fellowship meal. (And by the way, these people love to eat together and do so quite often and are very good at it.) In the corners of the room they had set up three large booths – A Ministry Team Booth – An Outreach Mission Booth – and a Spiritual Growth and Discipleship Booth.

Jesus: So how did that work?

Angel Beatrice: Well, everyone is invited, as the Holy Spirit leads them, to live out their Christian faith by giving their time, gifts, and passions to one of the church’s in-house ministries, one of the church’s external outreach ministries, and one of the church’s many spiritual growth and discipleship ministries and opportunities. If a person wants to start a new ministry or group, they can do that also.

It was obvious that people are given the freedom to use their spiritual gifts and passions where they feel you, the Holy Spirit, are leading them.

Angel Albert: The first booth was their Spiritual Growth and Discipleship Booth. It was clear that the church is very interested in Spiritual Growth and Spiritual Formation, so everyone is encouraged to join or lead a Small Discipleship and Support Group. Their primary groups are their In-Home Bible Study Groups, their Prayer Groups, their Youth and Children's Groups, and their Music Groups. But, anyone may start another type of group and are encouraged to do so.

Angel Beatrice: Yes, and they have some really interesting and creative groups. One person started a "Movie Group" where they get together to watch a movie and then discuss it from a faith perspective. Another young man started a "Mountain Climbing Group" and when the group reached the top of a 14er they stop for prayer and bible study. One woman started a Mothers of Preschoolers Group which the church supported. Still, another couple who had lost a child started a Grief Support Group, not just for the church, but for the community. And their Strong Body Exercise, Quiet Mind Meditation, Prayerful Heart group is going strong. The purpose of these groups is not just to teach, but also to care for one another with genuine Christian compassion.

Angel Albert: Next, I went to the Outreach Ministry Booth. The church has four primary outreach ministries to support and give their time, resources and energy to: Evergreen Christian Outreach, the Mountain Resource Center, The Tennyson Center for Children, and the Food For Learning Ministry in Haiti.

Angel Beatrice: But if others have a passion for another Outreach Mission beyond these four, they are encouraged to become involved in that ministry as well, and to recruit others both inside and outside the church to help them. For example, there are some men and women who understood construction, and they volunteer their skills to help build a Habitat for Humanity home in the area. Some volunteer for the Evergreen Pregnancy Center. Still others give their time to the Children Disaster Services. The best thing is that people in the church are living out and sharing their faith by actively sharing their time, gifts, and resources with "the least of these". Through these various outreach ministries they also are inviting their neighbors and friends to become involved with them. That is how many of the new people, especially the younger people, were first introduced to the life of the church and to Jesus Christ. They called it "Missional Evangelism."

JESUS: It sounds like a nice a way to both evangelize the community and serve the community at the same time.

Angel Beatrice: Precisely. But they have not forgotten their sister churches and they continue to support the ministries and mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). And their building is full of non-profit community groups that are invited to use their facilities during the week.

Angel Albert: The In-House Ministry Booth was for all the ministries that basically took place within their church, for the church members and participants. As an effort to honor everyone's time, they had consolidated these ministries to just a few teams that were responsible for church programs. Again, people were encouraged to give their time and their gifts to at least one of their Ministry Teams.

God the Father: Well, I can certainly see why those who have been knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door have been so enthusiastic about this church. But, tell me, how do they make it all work? How have they organized themselves to further my kingdom?

Angel Albert: O Holy One, their Core Values are lifted up and honored in all that they do. They serve as the boundaries around the church's ministry and programs. If someone feels you are leading them to start a new ministry, that person has permission to do so as long as the ministry is aligned with their Core Values. The result has been some very creative and innovative ways of glorifying you in their community and throughout your world. For example....one young single that joined the church started a "fireside chat" that meets twice a month where other singles are invited to come to his house, build a fire in his fire-pit, and have a theological discussion over a current social issue. Another older couple started a traditional Sunday School Class that meets on Sunday morning. And a youth in their church used the church building for a fundraiser to support a fellow student who needed an expensive medical treatment. All three, because each idea was supported by their Core Values, felt like they could start their ministry without having to jump through any hoops of structure.

Angel Beatrice: But beyond that, about five years ago they decided to build their church structure around a musical model of a Jazz Band. They have intentionally moved away from the old organizational model based around an Orchestra. In the Orchestra model there are a conductor and different sections. All are playing their part from a written and prescribed score. In the Orchestra model no one can vary from the score and each "section" has its first chair leader. In their new "Jazz Band" model, there is still a leader, but he or she is just part of the band. While there is a basic structure, each person in the Jazz Band model is both invited and encouraged to play their part as the spirit leads them. This gives the church both structure, and the creative energy needed for new ministries. It gives people freedom, flexibility, and responsibility all at the same time.

God the Son: Hey, that sounds like a model I would have liked. No wonder we are being glorified in this church.

God the Spirit: Imagine that, an organizational structure that allows my spirit to move people where we desire them to move. How cool is that?

Angle Beatrice: It was cool indeed. But while we got a real sense of a loving, faithful, and gracious congregation on Sunday morning, we also deeply experienced those qualities during the week in their small groups.

Angle Albert: Yes. I attended one of the In-Home Bible Studies on Thursday night. While the study content was excellent, I also experienced authentic spiritual sharing and authentic spiritual caring. It was obvious that their small group leaders had received some training in how to lead a small group into spiritual authenticity. The people were both loved, and were invited to share their love.

Angel Beatrice: And on Saturday morning I was invited to be a puppeteer at the Life Care Center. In a place that often only knows suffering and despair, this ministry brought a rich joy and comfort to the residents, those who worked there, and to the puppeteers.

Angel Albert: On Saturday morning I went down to the Tennyson Center for Children and witnessed the church's youth caring for and playing with the in-residence children. The youth commented on

how that once-a-month ministry was one of the highlights of their lives. Their youth group leader, who is a part-time church assistant minister, is being a wonderful mentor to these young people.

Angel Beatrice: And on that same Saturday morning I walked by Rev. Miller's office and noticed that he was meeting with one of his church members for Spiritual Direction. Several years earlier he had made a commitment to meet periodically with the members of the church to have a spiritual conversation around how the Fruit of your Spirit was being manifested in their lives, how they were growing in their spiritual lives, and what they needed from the church to help them grow spiritually.

Jesus: Angels, all this sounds wonderful, but my personal experience is that sometimes when change is proposed it often times causes conflict. As the congregation made all these transitions, what did they do to help keep their personal relationships strong, especially among those in leadership positions?

Angel Albert: Again, their leaders did make a commitment to their Core Values. But every year they also worked on and developed a "leadership covenant." Every leader in the church, upon taking office, pledged to pray for the church, to always always be gentle with each other even if they had a difference of opinion, and to treat each other with respect and kindness. In other words, they pledge to interact with each other as if you are standing in their midst. Harsh behavior toward each other is simply not part of their culture. The result is a very peaceful and gentle church.

Angel Beatrice: And they have a dedicated group of members that prayerfully focus on strengthening healthy relationships between the pastor and church members. They serve as a conduit of good communication in the congregation. Instead of being a "complaint committee", they function as a support group for the Pastor where congregational joys, concerns, celebrations, and laments can be openly, honestly, and gently discussed.

God the Father: That is a nice report. We do have a few thousand other reports to hear this day. How would you summarize your findings?

Angel Albert: Holy Ones, I think we can summarize our report by sharing that at Evergreen Christian Church, the Great Commandment.....

Angel Beatrice: ... "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

Angel Albert:the Great Confession.....

Angel Beatrice: "Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God." (Matthew 16: 16)

Angel Albert: and the Great Commission

Angel Beatrice: "Go 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 I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19)

Angel Albert: are being fulfilled in incredible, faithful, gentle, and creative ways.

Angel Beatrice: And I concur.

God the Father: Angel Albert and Angel Beatrice, you have fulfilled your assignment well. I am. Uh.. I mean we are....Uh... I mean we three in one are eternally grateful.

Angel Beatrice: Never mind. But Father, there is one more thing. It seems that their Pastor, Duncan Miller, had set a goal of climbing all 54 mountains in Colorado that are over 14,000 feet tall before he retires. He only has one more to go. Sometime soon he will be climbing Little Bear Peak.

Jesus: LITTLE BEAR PEAK! That is the most difficult and most dangerous of all the climbs. Is he crazy or just stupid! If he is not careful he is going to be knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door before he's ready to be knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door!

Holy Spirit: Isn't there somehow we can help?

God the Father: Yes, I think there is. Angel Beatrice and Angel Albert, here is your next assignment. While staying incognito, you are to befriend Pastor Miller at the beginning of the climb and hike with him that day. He is going to need a couple of angels watching over him on that climb.

Angel Albert: You got it. We sure enjoy these fun assignments you give us.

God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit: AMEN

Key Future Story Points

(Where God is Calling Evergreen Christian Church in the year 2020)

➤ **A reaffirmation and commitment to our Core Values with major emphasis on the centrality of Christ, hospitality, caring for each other, and spiritual growth.**

➤ **Worship**

- 125 in Worship, with demographics mirroring our community
 - Largest group: those approaching or in retirement
 - Enough families with children to have an active youth ministry plus two or more Children's Church classes
- Additional summer Worship at local park and winter worship in ski settings
- Reaching out to Evergreen and Conifer High School youth musicians to help lead worship.
- No major change to current worship style: Traditional / Soft Contemporary Blend.

➤ **Spiritual Growth Opportunities and Ministries**

- Emphasis on helping people identify their Spiritual Gifts and Passions for ministry
- Commitment by members to "In-House Church Ministries", "Outreach Ministries", and "Spiritual Growth Opportunities" through a Stewardship of Time and Talents Day
- Members encouraged to start new ministries and small groups as the Spirit leads them. Ministries and Small Groups will fall within the boundaries of Core Values of the Congregation.
 - Possible Groups would include Bible Studies, Movies Groups, Singles Groups, Mother's Support Group, Grief Support Group, etc.
- Primary purposes of small groups are to care for one another with Christian compassion and provide an environment for Christian Spiritual Growth.
- The Pastor will regularly meet with members to discuss their Spiritual Journey

➤ **Leadership**

- Leadership covenant developed with focus on the way of Jesus.
- Small Group leaders trained in how to lead a small group into spiritual authenticity
- Pastoral Relationship Team focused on the needs of the Pastor and healthy congregational communication of joys and concerns.

➤ **Outreach**

- Major congregation support and commitment to four primary outreach ministries: Evergreen Christian Outreach, Mountain Resource Center, Tennyson Center for Children, and Haiti Food for Learning

- Individuals encouraged to become involved in other Outreach Ministries as led by the Spirit
 - Offering of building space for community non-profit organizations.
- **Additional Staff** of part-time Youth and Children's Minister and Office Administration
- **Evangelism and Church Growth**
- Commitment to grow the church to 125 in worship on an average Sunday
 - Emphasis on "Missional Evangelism" where visitors encounter the church first through the outreach ministries of members.
- **Structure**
- Movement away from a hierarchical structure. (Orchestra Model vs. Jazz Model)
 - A simpler and streamlined leadership team structure for organizing ministries and conducting the business of the church