

“People come and go
but the Lord’s vision remains.”

Let’s take a straw poll to help understand the vision:

1. Who was born in Carvoeiro?
2. Who was born in the Algarve?
3. Who was born in Portugal?
4. Who has lived in the Algarve for more than 10 years?
5. Who speaks more than 1 language?

The International community in the Algarve is made up of people from many different nations, diverse in culture (church and secular) as well as language and tradition.

People are here:

- **Short term:** visitors, holiday makers, people passing through etc.
- **Medium term:** escaping the cold; retirement, campervanners and some contracted to work in tourism related jobs.
- **Long term:** born here or choose to make it their home or place of business.

We prayerfully trust the Lord brings along people to All Nations, and we want to bless them for as long as they stay.

However, not everyone who comes through the door on a Sunday is willing or able to walk in unity with how we are building *this* local church. There are some important differences with our calling and the way we do things e.g. translation, music style and our Sunday service focus, which is based on:

Acts 2:42 i.e. Word – Worship - Communion - Fellowship.

However, for many newcomers, these aspects are advantageous (especially translation) but if your church experience is very different from ours, you may find them distracting.

Let’s focus on the specific vision we have been given for All Nations, and how the Lord is leading us at this difficult time.

When we were called to lead the fellowship back in 2017 we wrote to the church family explaining the vision and again in 2019 we gave an update of progress. So it's time we looked again at what the Lord is saying to us.

We identified the challenges of building a local church in the Algarve but never imagined what we would be up against – Pandemic and all!

However, we continue to listen to the Lord and trust in an Almighty God, who has been gracious and faithful to us, both on the mountain top and in the valleys. We have come through much together and we give thanks to those who have weathered the storms with us.

As new people come to All Nations, we find it helpful to explain the vision. We do this to be sure the Lord has called them to our fellowship, not just because we are the nearest church to where they live.

We clarify:

1. Who we are, 2. What we do and 3. Why would you join us.

We encourage those who are already followers of Jesus to remain in prayer and visit other churches in the region before settling down with All Nations. This helps to maintain unity in the church and avoids confusion and disappointment later on.

On the other hand, those who come seeking faith in Jesus, generally find it easier to fit in, as many have no fixed ideas of what a church looks like.

So it is important and biblical to share our vision regularly.

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no vision, the people perish.*

We continue to pray that *the Lord* would lead and guide those He is calling to our fellowship, and they would come with an open heart to share, develop and serve with us. We pray every Tuesday by name, for each newcomer.

Let us look at three aspects of the vision, which are specifically identified and can be found on our website at www.allnationsalgarve.com

1. WHO ARE WE? *We are an International Christian Community Church of Spirit-filled believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

We trust in God's grace to save us through faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross - it is a gift from God to all who believe...

There is a lot of information in that short statement and if you were to read it carefully, you should have a good idea of “who we are.”

One significant word I would like to point out is “grace.” We continue to teach that we are **saved, sanctified** and **glorified** by the same grace. Grace is foundational to an understanding of who we are in Christ.

It caught us by surprise how many people didn’t understand grace, its fullness; and its power. You can pick up some of the teachings on our YouTube channel and we will be running the Grace Course frequently.

2. WHAT DO WE DO? *We meet every Sunday and throughout the week to pray, receive teaching from God’s Word, worship and, sing contemporary worship songs together; translation is made available in Portuguese and German. There is teaching for children in English and Portuguese on Sunday mornings.*

We enjoy fellowship together following Sunday worship. We also run courses like Alpha, Freedom in Christ and the Grace Course.

Most newcomers are keen to ask: “what do you do?” and our reply is: “what we do,” is always done in line with “who we are” and the vision we have been given. I will share more detail about that in a moment.

3. WHY WOULD YOU JOIN US? *Our mission and vision is to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all who come to visit or live in the Algarve. We trust the Lord is building His church, using every gift to build up the body of Christ in love.*

We believe the new life in Jesus and walking in step with the Holy Spirit, will demonstrate our faith and the power of God to save. **Acts 1:8** *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

The early church were empowered to become witnesses, and whether we live in Carvoeiro, Algarve, Portugal or beyond, we have been given the same power to witness and bring people to Jesus!

That is a little about **who** we are: **what** we do and **why would you join us**; now let’s look again at **what** we do.

Activities are arranged around 3 themes:

Sharing – Developing - Serving

1st theme: SHARING (Matthew 28:19) *therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*

Sharing our lives and faith in Jesus with families, friends, colleagues – everyone! That may be as simple as taking coffee with a friend or an organised event locally, nationally or even internationally.

Jesus makes the invitation to come:

“Come to me all who are weary” (**Matthew 11:28**)

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me” (**John 6:37**)

“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (**John 7:37**)

We build relationships with those the Lord is calling out of darkness and into the glorious light of His Son, and we simply invite them to “come” just like Phillip said to Nathanael “come and see;” come to a church breakfast; come to our home-group, simply come and meet Jesus.

2nd theme: DEVELOPING (I Timothy 4:16) *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

When someone comes to Jesus, we help them develop their faith in Christ i.e. disciple/to follow.

Developing the new life in Christ focuses on:

- **Putting Jesus first (Mark 8:34-38)**
Counting the cost of following Jesus
- **Following Jesus’ teachings (John 8:31-32)**
The truth will set us free from error
- **Fruitfulness (John 15:5-8)**
Bearing fruit (love) will bring glory to the Father
- **Love for other disciples (John 13:34-35)**
This is how we are known as followers of Jesus

The Apostle Peter gives the church encouragement to develop and grow as followers of Christ Jesus:

2 Peter 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

So we continue to invite people to come to Jesus; then help one another grow in the GRACE and KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We find the best way to grow is to apply what we learn by serving the body of Christ.

3rd theme: SERVING (Ephesians 4:12-13) *to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Mark 10:45 *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”* we follow the example of Jesus and serve sacrificially to express our faith in the love of God, who lives in, and works through us to reach a lost world.

So having outlined the vision, how do you see that working out for you, is it something you can catch and hold?

Do you see yourself as a future leader with us or with any other church?

If you do, we want to invest in you, to build upon the strong foundation of Christ Jesus. We want to release you into ministry and All Nations is a great place to exercise your God given gifts and calling.

There are many challenges to building a church, least of all here in the Algarve but as we place our trust in, and follow Jesus, we will see...

Ephesians 3:20 *...him who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...*

Jesus is building His church, are you committed to **sharing, developing** and **servicing** in partnership with us, to fulfil His vision?

Amen.