



REACH»

FUELING A MOVEMENT THAT
REACHES PEOPLE AND RENEWS COMMUNITIES





www.reach.christchurchil.org



DEAR CHRIST CHURCH FAMILY,

For just over thirty-seven years, Christ Church has been helping people discover life with God. This is our mission. It comes to us from Jesus Himself and it guides everything we do.

During the three and a half decades we've tried to follow this call, we've had several "defining moments." One occurred at our first worship service. Another happened the first time someone professed faith in Christ. Numerous others have followed: our first baptism service, our first mission trip, our first building, etc.

You are holding a book that represents a new, defining moment. One that calls us to step up, take some risks and play offense.

We are calling this initiative REACH, because our goal is to REACH out in every direction with the love, grace, mercy and power of God.

Make no mistake, REACH is a bold plan. If God is not in it, we will falter. But if He is, He will prevail.

Thanks for reading this and being involved. Our plans call for prayer, hard work, generosity and sacrifice - but those are good things. It is a privilege and opportunity to help fuel a movement that reaches people and renews communities.

I am looking forward to the next few years, and praying that the Lord will use us in ways that rock heaven. May the Lord guide, direct and bless our efforts.

Let's REACH together.

MIKE WOODRUFF



On January 28, 2018, people from all campuses gathered for Vision Sunday to be part of the unveiling of a two year vision for Christ Church—a vision that will take all of us.



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OUR MISSION

TO HELP PEOPLE
DISCOVER LIFE WITH GOD

OUR VISION

TO FUEL A MOVEMENT THAT
REACHES PEOPLE AND
RENEWS COMMUNITIES

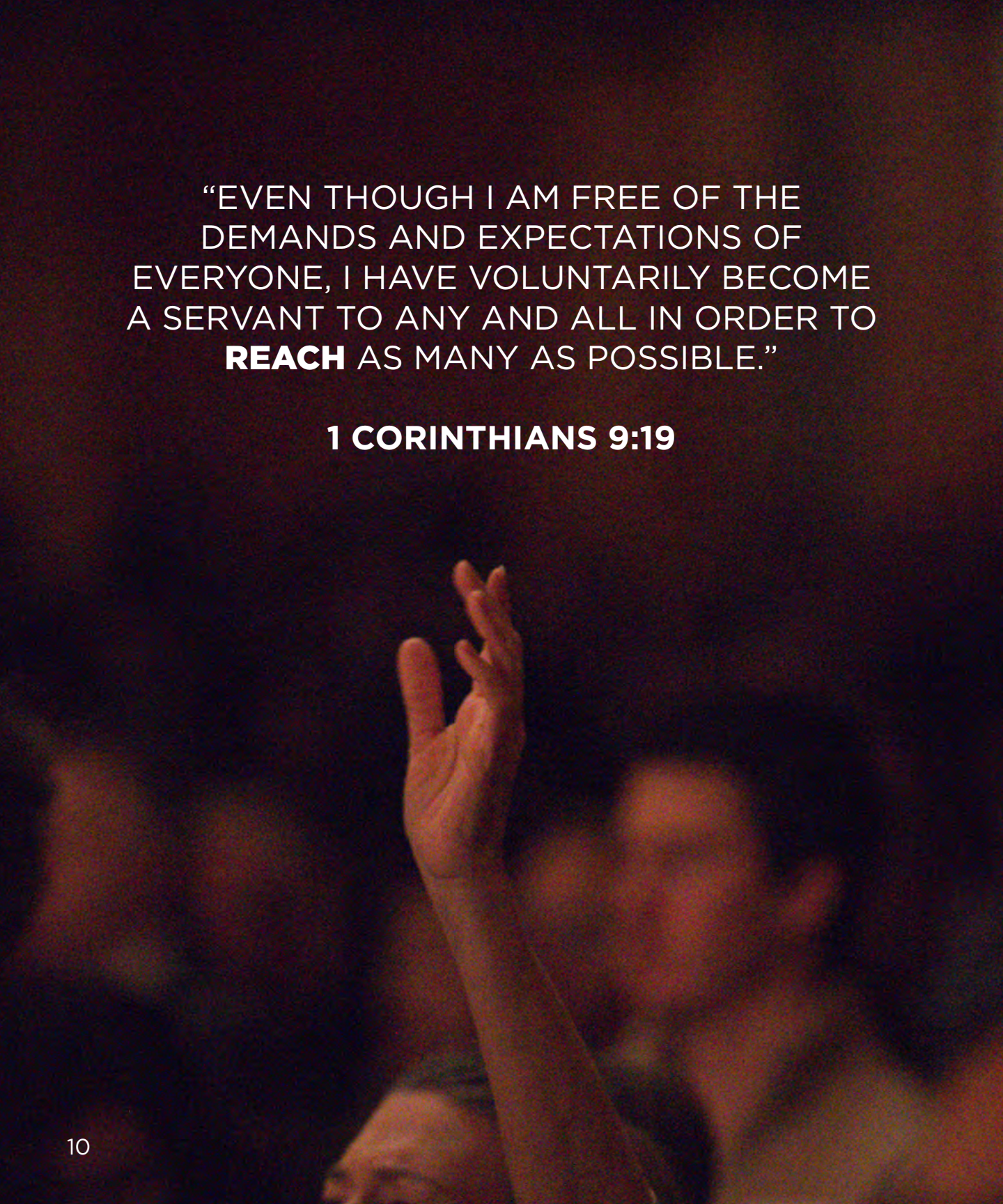
CHRIST COMMISSIONED HIS FOLLOWERS TO MAKE DISCIPLES.

This means inviting people to embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and walking alongside them as they learn to Love God, Serve Others and Reach One.

The church is God's plan for accomplishing this. Our goal is to see people come to faith and to see Christ Church – and other churches – fully embrace God's plan.

  **350,000**

The number of unchurched people in Lake County. Most of these people say they believe in God, are “spiritual” and pray regularly. Many claim they would attend a church if invited.



“EVEN THOUGH I AM FREE OF THE
DEMANDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF
EVERYONE, I HAVE VOLUNTARILY BECOME
A SERVANT TO ANY AND ALL IN ORDER TO
REACH AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.”

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19

REACH

Over the past year, Christ Church has been mobilizing
“to fuel a movement that reaches people and renews communities.”

We are doing this because we believe God commissions His followers to help lost people discover life with God, and that the church should be designed to equip everyone to Love God, Serve Others and Reach One.

What makes REACH unique are our goals to expand our efforts
both locally and globally over the next two years.

This will require all of us to grow deeper in Christ-likeness.

REACHING PEOPLE



**CHRIST CHURCH
CROSSROADS**

Over **700,000** people live in Lake County and the surrounding area.

Less than 20% are connected to a church.



**CHRIST CHURCH
LAKE FOREST**



**CHRIST CHURCH
HIGHLAND PARK**

Christ Church Partners: Armando & Jennifer, Refugee Church Leaders

Over **3.5 million** refugees live in the Middle East.

70% are women and children.

Refugee churches help people **discover life with God** through bringing discipleship, encouragement and resources.

MIDDLE EAST



INDIA

Christ Church Partner: Hindustan Bible Institute (HBI)

1.2 billion people live in India.

2.3% identify as Christian.

HBI is working to train **100,000** leaders to see one church of every people group in every city and village in India.

GHANA



Christ Church Partner: International Needs (IN)

Over 2,900 women have been freed from ritual slavery through International Needs.

Thousands remain enslaved in rural Ghana.

Rural churches work to bring evangelism, discipleship and training to those **freed from slavery**.



RENEWING COMMUNITIES

Christ Church is making a difference in our local area. From partnerships with local individuals and organizations, we are seeking to renew communities.



COLLECTIONS



JUSTICE/RECONCILIATION



EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP



HOUSING



EDUCATIONAL/VOCATIONAL



SENIORS

Recently, Christ Church launched **Renew Communities**, a 501(c)3, designed to create jobs, build community-focused homes and develop God-honoring relationships.

CoffeeFresh in North Chicago is one of many companies we are working with to grow jobs. Buy ReNew Coffee and other roasts at www.coffeebytheroast.com.

Each purchase helps grow jobs and supports Renew Communities.



MATTHEW HOMES

A Matthew Home family seeks to be a “light on a hill” to the neighbors on their street (Matt 5:14). We place two Matthew homes on each block. Families on each block work together to strengthen community, support one another, increase safety and model God’s love. Matthew families are chosen in cooperation with The Fuller Center for Housing, local churches and non-profits from among those interested in giving back to North Chicago.



BEFORE

AFTER

GOALS

100% ENGAGEMENT

Our first hope is that REACH helps everyone who calls Christ Church home, grow in faith and Christ-likeness. REACH is a discipleship initiative before it is anything else. We want to see lost people find Christ, but we also want to see those who know Christ grow. Expect to be pushed.

\$19M OVER TWO YEARS

The second aspect of REACH is a funding initiative. In order to fund existing operations and expand in new ways, we need to raise \$19M. This breaks out as \$12M for two years of operating expenses and an additional \$7M to REACH.

SPECIFICS



OPERATING BUDGET: \$12M

Our weekly ministry environments matter. These environments create a culture of love, hope and mercy each and everyday...a culture that is foundational to the transforming power of the Gospel. We want to empower these environments within our current campuses, as well as our local and global mission programs.

A MOVEMENT THAT REACHES PEOPLE: \$5.7M

The majority of expanded funds will be used to launch three campuses locally and six new churches overseas. The latter will chiefly be done in cooperation with our global partners in Ghana, India and Turkey. We will also invest locally in leadership development, evangelism training and discipleship. Our prayer is that 500 people will be baptized.

AND RENEWS COMMUNITIES: \$1.4M

We want to help those struggling in Lake County, principally in North Chicago. In addition to funds, we intend to provide 100,000 volunteer hours between now and the end of 2020.

OUR STORIES

God has you here for a purpose. Where He has placed you-in your neighborhood, your job, your relationships-is no accident.

You are placed where you can love people and serve this city in ways no single other person in Lake County can do.

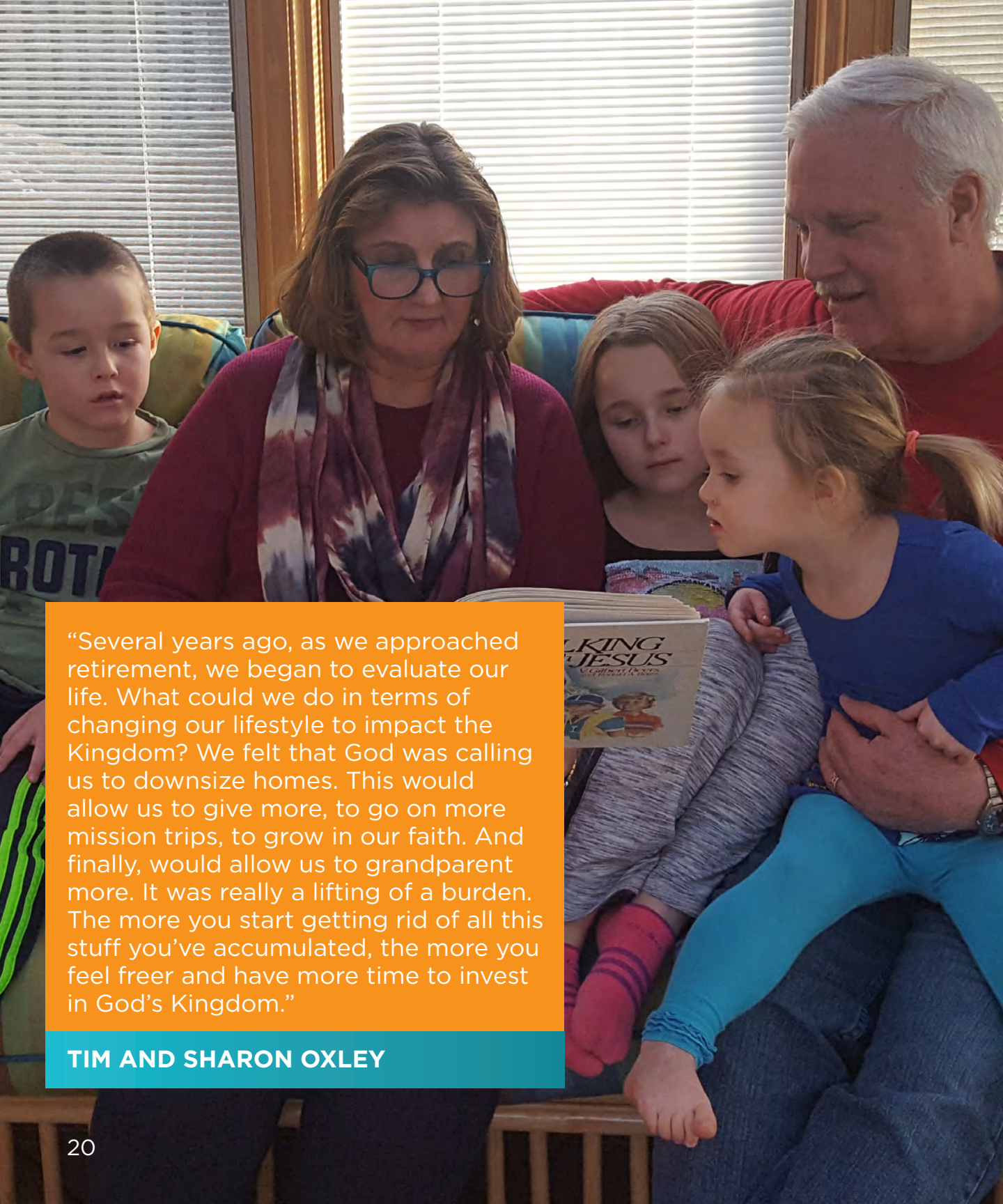
Many from Christ Church are saying “I’m In” REACH-to fuel a movement that reaches people and renews communities.

Read some of their stories in the next few pages.




“Compass is a ministry of Christ Church that helps 8th graders understand more about who they are and the Christian life. There is a saying ‘It takes a village to raise a child.’ These middle schoolers are the future generation. They are going to be leaders and they are going to challenge each other, as well as the world, in their faith. Christ Church has become my village and has planted in me the seeds of compassion. I love helping and challenging others to grow in their faith. I want to be part of the village that helps teens live out their faith.”

JABIN JOSEPH



“Several years ago, as we approached retirement, we began to evaluate our life. What could we do in terms of changing our lifestyle to impact the Kingdom? We felt that God was calling us to downsize homes. This would allow us to give more, to go on more mission trips, to grow in our faith. And finally, would allow us to grandparent more. It was really a lifting of a burden. The more you start getting rid of all this stuff you’ve accumulated, the more you feel freer and have more time to invest in God’s Kingdom.”

TIM AND SHARON OXLEY



“When the Justice Center was announced, there was something in me that said “you need to do this.” The Justice Center at Christ Church assists people who are having legal problems and may not be able to afford an attorney. We also try to help people with financial issues. We see people leave happy with burdens lifted off of their shoulders. I feel like we are helping to relieve these issues in people’s lives so that they can focus in their spiritual lives. God is teaching me through serving at the Justice Center how He works in other people’s lives and it helps me to see how He is working in my life.”

DAVID BACINO

IT'S TIME TO REACH

The love of God compels us to REACH. This includes sharing the Good News of Christ and serving as the hands and feet of God.

Our efforts to do this will focus on multiplying vibrant, Gospel-centered churches. This is our plan because the local church is God's plan. It is also our plan because when churches thrive, everyone wins. The United States - and the world - desperately needs more vital, growing and prevailing churches.

SO WHAT ARE YOU ASKING ME TO DO? Our prayer is that everyone who calls Christ Church home will be involved with REACH in two ways:

1. We want this initiative to drive you closer to Christ. In fact, we are praying that during REACH you will lean more fully into the call to Love God, Serve Others and Reach One.
2. We want you to generously participate with both your time and money.

ONE FUND

It's possible that you've been part of a church campaign where you were asked to give a second gift "above and beyond" your normal giving. In fact, we used this model ten years ago with the Step of Faith campaign that financed the expansion of the Lake Forest campus.

Step of Faith was successful and we are very thankful to all who participated. But during that campaign we realized that the phrase "above and beyond" giving was confusing to those who had not established a baseline of support of the church, it diminished the significance of the support of the ongoing work of the church.

In light of this, REACH will employ a One Fund model. This means that during the two years of the REACH initiative, we will be rolling all of our work – and all of our expenses – under one banner. This means that everything from our operating budget (e.g., funding our current programs, maintaining our facilities, supporting our local and global partners, paying staff, etc.) and the new initiatives (funding start up campuses locally, expanding our work in North Chicago, helping our level one global partners launch new churches) will be combined in one budget.

This reflects the way the money is actually spent, and it allows everyone to be involved in everything we do.

GIVING STEPS

FIRST GIFT

A First Gift is just that – it marks the first time you make a contribution to the church. This is generally done in response to understanding God’s love and being instructed about giving from His Word. **2 Corinthians 8:7-15**

CONSISTENT GIVING

A Consistent Giver is someone who decides to make giving a consistent part of their life. **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**

INTENTIONAL GIVING

An Intentional Giver is someone who relates their giving to other things. This person might ask, “Why am I giving more to AT&T than to God? Why am I spending more on a car payment than I do to help the poor?” The Intentional Giver is also someone who flips the equation. Rather than giving out of what is left after they spend on other matters, they give first. Typically this is done by establishing the percentage of household income that will go to the cause of Christ. **Luke 14:28-35**

TITHING

A person who tithes gives the first ten percent of their income to the Lord. This practice, which is taught in the Bible, is rooted in the belief that everything belongs to God and that the first-fruits (first portion) of that provision is to be given back to Him in recognition of His ownership and in thanksgiving for providing for us. **Malachi 3**

LEGACY GIVING

A Legacy Giver is someone who thinks about the long-term effects of generosity. They choose to live below their means in order to give more than ten percent of their income away. **1 Timothy 6:6-19**

WAYS TO GIVE



CASH OR CHECKS

may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church



MOBILE GIVING

Download the app (search Christ Church IL) and give regularly



ACH GIVING

Download an ACH form online, fill it out and return it to the office



STOCK OR MUTUAL FUNDS

may be received in our account, contact our Finance Department at finance@cclf.org

TWO-YEAR GIFT CHART

GIFTS NEEDED	TWO-YEAR GIFT LEVEL	MONTHLY GIFT	GIFT LEVEL TOTAL
1	\$1,500,000	\$62,500	\$1,500,000
2	\$1,000,000	\$41,667	\$2,000,000
3	\$750,000	\$31,250	\$2,250,000
4	\$400,000	\$16,667	\$1,600,000
7	\$200,000	\$8,333	\$1,400,000
13	\$100,000	\$4,167	\$1,300,000
25	\$50,000	\$2,083	\$1,250,000
60	\$30,000	\$1,250	\$1,800,000
100	\$20,000	\$833	\$2,000,000
125	\$9,600	\$400	\$1,200,000
250	\$4,800	\$200	\$1,200,000
350	\$2,400	\$100	\$840,000
550	\$1,200	\$50	\$660,000
1,490			\$19,000,000

As you pray and discern how God would ask you to give during this time, use this gift chart as a discipleship tool—let it be something that inspires and challenges you towards greater generosity for Christ’s Kingdom as we seek to give it all for Him.

EXTEND YOUR REACH

\$

What I/we would normally give in a year
(regular giving, special projects, missions, etc.)

+\$

My/Our expanded annual generosity
as part of the REACH initiative

=\$

x 2 YEARS



\$

Gifts from my/our stored resources:

+\$

MY/OUR TOTAL 2-YEAR REACH COMMITMENT



\$

April 2018-March 2020

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

CHURCH CAMPUS: _____

» NEXT STEPS

- 1 Ask God to lead you in this process, trusting Him to extend your Reach.
- 2 Calculate what your two-year commitment will be. This will include two years of annual giving plus your REACH amount.
- 3 Be one of the first to participate in REACH by participating in Advance Commitment night on March 9, 2018.
- 4 Encourage others to join you in REACHing towards generosity.



KEY DATES

LAUNCH WEEKEND:

February 17-18, 2018

ADVANCE COMMITMENT NIGHT:

March 9, 2018

COMMITMENT WEEKEND:

March 17-18, 2018

CELEBRATION WEEKEND + BIG GIVE:

April 14-15, 2018

WHY REACH

WHY DO THIS? WHY STRETCH OURSELVES? WHY SACRIFICE?

These are good questions. Do they have good answers? Yes.

In Isaiah 6, God famously asks, *“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”* And Isaiah responded, *‘Here I am Lord, send me!’*

The Lord is looking for faithful men and women. His plan uses willing and obedient servants who respond to His call.



We should REACH because we have been called by God to REACH (Matthew 28:18-20). We should REACH because God created us to REACH (Ephesians 2:10). We should REACH because someone REACHed us!

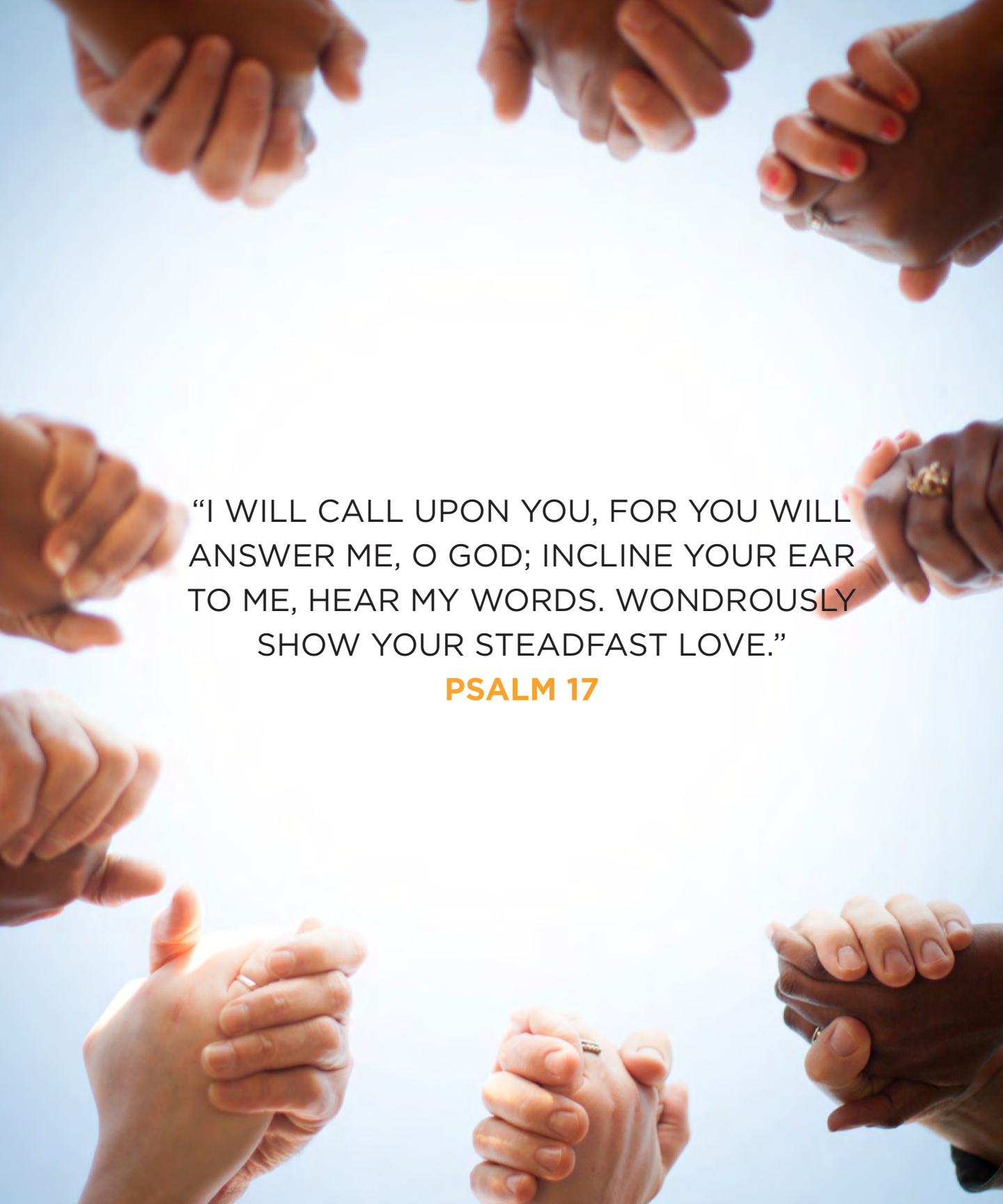
God has uniquely positioned Christ Church “for just such a time as this.”

WHY ARE WE SO FOCUSED ON CHURCHES?

We believe that the church is God’s plan to advance His kingdom. We further believe that healthy, prevailing churches are the most effective way to reach unchurched people and make disciples. Beyond that, we believe that the world desperately needs the Church to be the Church – e.g., a multiplying community of grace, hope and love based on the life, teaching and work of Jesus Christ. When churches thrive everyone wins.

WHY ARE WE SO FOCUSED ON SERVING?

We invest a lot of time mobilizing people to serve. This includes directing people to our local partners (PADS homeless shelter, LOVE Inc., North Chicago Community Partners, Fuller Center for Housing, etc.) and also our international ones (Hindustan Bible Institute in India, International Teams in Turkey and International Needs in Ghana). It also includes starting programs (such as Matthew Homes and the Justice Center) and helping other churches. Over the next three years we hope to donate 100,000 volunteer hours outside our walls. Why? Because we were created in Christ Jesus to do good works; because serving is one of the ways we grow; because loving and serving others helps persuade people of God’s care, and because the world desperately needs people who are going to care for others. Everyone wins when you serve, starting with you.



"I WILL CALL UPON YOU, FOR YOU WILL
ANSWER ME, O GOD; INCLINE YOUR EAR
TO ME, HEAR MY WORDS. WONDROUSLY
SHOW YOUR STEADFAST LOVE."

PSALM 17

CALL TO PRAYER

The foundation of our effort and energy is prayer. God's Word tells us to pour out our hearts to Him and He will hear and answer us.

Prayer is simply talking to God, listening to His prompts, and responding to Him; it's two-way communication. Prayer is meant for us to experience God's presence in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Prayer is one of the foundations of our faith.

**"GOD'S BLESSINGS THROUGH PRAYER CAN CHANGE OUR LIVES, INVIGORATE OUR CHURCH AND TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITIES... AS GOD'S PEOPLE, LET'S ENGAGE IN SERIOUS PRAYER AND BECOME A LIVING DISPLAY OF WHAT HE ALONE CAN ACCOMPLISH."
-JIM CYMBALA**

Within this resource, you will find devotional content for your daily pursuit of God.

Join us February 19-March 18 as we come together collectively to pray. There are prayer gatherings at each campus:

Lake Forest: Sundays, 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Crossroads: Sundays, 10:30-10:50 a.m.,

Highland Park: Sundays, 9:00-9:30 a.m. and Thursdays 6:00-6:30 p.m.

We sincerely hope you will engage in these prayer opportunities. We believe God has things planned far larger than we can even imagine, we do not want to miss joining God in what He has in store for Christ Church, our communities, and the world, so let us pray!



WEEK 1

REACH BECAUSE OF GOD

WEEKEND SERIES NOTES

DATE: February 17/18

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 11 & 12

**“WE ARE TAKING A
NEXT STEP TO
REACH PEOPLE
AND
RENEW COMMUNITIES.”**

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WARM UP QUESTIONS

Can you remember a time as a child when you did something that was scary?

Can you remember a decision you made as an adult that required a step of faith?

Can you remember a time you didn't do something because it was too scary or uncertain?

BIBLE EXPLORATION: READ JOSHUA 3:1-17

About this Story

The Jordan River, which is very steep, has a strong current and the Jews didn't swim.

Crossing the Jordan was a big deal and very scary.

God tells them to prepare themselves to cross this river and gives some specific instructions.

It requires strong leadership from Joshua and people willing to follow instruction.

God shows up.

Questions

What do you think the Israelites are feeling about crossing the Jordan River?

What doubts do you think they experienced?

What type of relationship do we see between God, Joshua and the Israelites?

Have you experienced following a leader, like Joshua, who shares a plan that comes from the Lord?

Why does following God's specific instructions matter so much?

THE FIRST THING WE SEE ABOUT THE CALL FROM GOD IS THAT ABRAHAM HAD TO TAKE SOME NEXT STEPS. THE SECOND THING WE REALIZE IS THAT THIS CALL DEMANDS A SURRENDER OF HIS WILL AND A STEP OF FAITH.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

What did you hear in the sermon that challenged your normal point of view?

What did you hear about the new Christ Church vision that excites you?

Why is it comforting to see God use a flawed person like Abraham?

What can we learn from the things Abraham does right when following God?

How can the new vision of Christ Church change your plans?

What are the next steps you believe God is asking you to take?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 1

SERMON QUOTE

“Crossing the Jordan meant taking a big dramatic step of faith.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

God said to Jeremiah, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.” (17:7) - whose hope, confidence and assurance are God Himself.

Faith and trust are closely related. To trust someone, we must know them well enough to believe they are worthy of that trust. God said to Habakkuk, “The righteous will live, be alive and flourish, by his faith.” If we want to live the new life Jesus has given us, we must make Him our top priority, our primary source.

How do we get there? I know of only one way, by spending time alone with Him in His Word, getting to know Him. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). In the Bible, we are given over 700 different names and titles of God, each invested with unique significance, revealing the essence of His character and attributes. Psalm 9:10 says “Those who know Your Name will put their trust in You.” Jesus came to earth that we might know God; He is the logic of God and the exact image of His nature.

Sometimes faith is a struggle; often it means contending for it, choosing not to lean on our own understanding, as we are so prone to do, but deliberately choosing to surrender to His sovereignty. To live the new life of faith, we must know Him. Will you press on to know Him, to make it your goal to seek and know Him by His Spirit?

AUTHOR BIO

Stephanie Hayes has been part of the Lake Forest and Highland Park campuses for 6+ years, involved in prayer and global outreach.

PRAYER

LORD, I want to know You and serve You with my whole heart, mind and strength.
By the breath of Your Spirit within me, help me seek You and learn Your ways.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 2

SERMON QUOTE

“We are called to be: light in the darkness; a source of hope; salt; Good Neighbors; Good Stewards; those who consider others more important than themselves; those who love their enemies; those who live in light of eternity.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Growing up in Brooklyn, I lived in an apartment building adjoined to other buildings. The noise of neighbors and sirens were customary sounds throughout the day and night. Thus, the New York way was to keep to yourself, make no eye contact and mind your own business. Being too inquisitive could be dangerous.

Despite living in the “concrete jungle,” I can still remember acts of neighborly kindness. A childhood friend of mine had alcoholic parents who engaged in weekly knife fights that often brought the police. One of our Christian neighbors took in my friend and raised her until she completed high school and had earned a track college scholarship. I still remember my friend as a strong Christian teenager, who was saved, literally, from a life of destitution and I marvel at the generosity of my neighbors.

Our block, despite being in an extremely dangerous neighborhood, was seen as a model block. People looked out for one another, and residents felt safer walking around at night. Even Sam, our resident homeless man, could expect to be treated with respect and dignity. At times, someone would take up a collection for a family who had lost a loved one which conveyed neighborly love and compassion. It became a “beacon on a hill,” compared to the other blocks. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be a source of light and hope to those who have none. This charge evokes a natural response of resistance; to remain within one’s comfort zone and to attend only to the concerns of “me and mine.” But God persistently calls us to be first responders, to go beyond ourselves, beyond our “now” thinking and invites us to give, to share and to love, so that others would see us as instruments of God’s goodness and ultimately be drawn to Him.

AUTHOR BIO

Sandra Zamble has attended the Lake Forest campus since 2001. She is involved in the 1-to-1 Care team, gospel choir and altar prayer service ministry. Her husband, Tony, serves as an elder at Christ Church.



PRAYER

Help me LORD to be a light to someone, to share the truth of Your love and mercy in a practical and encouraging way, drawing them and me into Your transforming presence.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 3

SERMON QUOTE

“There are no heroes other than Jesus in here. We get the real story about how bad people can be, I find to be a good thing – a comforting thing – because I am deeply flawed. It is encouraging to see God work with Abraham after he does some spectacularly bad things.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

One of the many benefits of reading through the Bible is that it underscores the fact that the Bible is not a collection of stories, it is God’s story. In that story, God uses many individuals. With the exception of Jesus, each individual is deeply flawed, even including the heroes of the faith. In fact, it is rather disappointing to read over and over again about the heroes of the faith making egregious mistakes. How could they do that? They are supposed to be the heroes of the faith!

But they are actually not supposed to be heroes. We have only one hero, and that is Jesus. All of the rest of those individuals are just those who have gone before us whom God chose to use in various, sometimes very powerful ways. They are just like you and me, deeply flawed and marred by sin.

Just as He used each individual mentioned in the Bible, God can use each one of us for His purposes in spite of our shortcomings. You don’t have to be of heroic stature to be used by God, He can use you as you are. How encouraging it is that God can use even us for the fulfillment of His Kingdom. What a blessing it is to have the larger perspective that God is continuing “His story” as history unfolds, and you and I are a part of it.

AUTHOR BIO

Mark Neerhof and his wife Betty have been members of Christ Church since 2006.

PRAYER

O God, King of all history, guide me today to receive Your forgiveness and live in the reality of the riches of the grace You have lavished upon me, a sinner, and be willing to freely give to others out of that inestimable abundance.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 4

SERMON QUOTE

“This is the game changer. The intervention of God – more technically – ‘the call of God,’ changes everything.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

In the Bible, God sometimes got people’s attention in BIG ways. Like a talking snake in a beautiful garden, or people waking up one morning and finding that everyone in town spoke a different language, or a flood that lasted forty days and nights and wiped out everyone on the face of the earth who wasn’t aboard Noah’s boat. All these attention-getters happened in the first chapters of the Bible.

But then, the big attention getters stopped for awhile. Things went quiet for around 400 years, the approximate amount of time between The Flood and Abraham. One day, something happened that stopped Abraham in his tracks. The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly what it was, but it got Abraham’s attention.

Abraham turned his back on the multiple gods of his father and his native Babylon. Later, he also left Heran, his secure hometown where he had come many years earlier with his family, a town like Ur, also filled with idol worshippers. He traveled hundreds of miles to find a place where he could establish a nation where people worshipped The One True God in Heaven. The Divine Intervention that happened for Abraham, which was so un-spectacular that Scripture doesn’t even record exactly what it was, had life changing and life giving consequences for the world, and for us, today. The story of redemption began with one man who paid attention to some event, some circumstance, or some spoken word that he took as God’s Word to him.

I wonder what might happen for us today if we paid attention to God’s interventions in our lives. A circumstance. An event. A song. Some spoken or written word. God speaks to us today in many, mostly ordinary ways. But we have to have ears that are constantly listening for God to speak. God may have some surprising things in store for us, just as He had in store for Abraham.

AUTHOR BIO

Ruth Senter has been attending Christ Church for 22 years and served as Women’s Ministry Director for about 2 1/2 years. She also taught Christ Church Lake Forest’s Women’s Morning Bible Break for many years.

PRAYER

Lord, give me the spiritual ears to hear You today, the eyes to see You even in the most ordinary moments; for You call me to live awake and attentive to Your presence, in step with what You are calling me to be and do.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 5

SERMON QUOTE

“The first thing we see about the call from God, is that Abraham had to take some next steps. The second thing we realize is that this call demands a surrender of his will.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Abraham might have thought he was surrendering to God when he agreed with God’s vision for his life: that he would be the forefather of a new nation and promise and that God would use him to bless all the earth. I wonder if he would have agreed with God’s vision for his life if he knew the path he and his offspring would take to get there.

Surrendering to God’s plan is often easy when we think of the end. After all, this is the same God that promises that all things work out for our good in the end. But surrendering to the methods God uses to accomplish His vision is a whole different story. It is here that we often give up on God’s call for our lives. When it seems like He must have forgotten the promise He made, the call He gave or the plan He had.

This reminds me of one of my favorite books, *Hinds’ Feet on High Places*, when the main character sees the path before her detour toward a great desert and she says,

“We mustn’t go down there. The Shepherd has called me to the High Places. We must find some path which goes up, but certainly not down there.”

Sometimes it can feel like we know the best route to take to the call God has on our lives, but surrendering to God means surrendering our vision and our means.

AUTHOR BIO

Joanna Tong and her husband Stefan have been attending Christ Church for more than three years. She serves as a small group leader with the SHYG High School group and runs Sisterhood for High School girls.

PRAYER

Eternal Father, God of all wisdom and knowledge, help me surrender today to Your plan, Your way, Your sovereignty; strengthen me by Your Spirit to put my whole trust in You.



WEEK 2

REACH FOR GOD

WEEKEND SERIES NOTES

DATE: February 24/25

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 13:1-14

**“GOD WILL KEEP
HIS PROMISES TO ME.
I DO NOT HAVE
TO FIGHT FOR MY WAY,
FOR MY ADVANTAGE.”**

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WARM UP QUESTIONS

When have you experienced a time where someone else helped you out?

What “fork in the road” have you experienced in your life and what decision did you make?

When have you helped someone else in a difficult situation?

BIBLE EXPLORATION: READ GENESIS 13:1-17

About this Story

Lot and Abraham had both grown their livestock and could no longer share land.

Abraham takes the initiative and gives Lot first choice.

Abraham had the power, yet deferred to Lot.

Lot chooses and Abraham lets him have what he wants.

God makes a promise to Abraham about future security after Abraham puts Lot first.

Questions

What kind of relationship does Abraham have with Lot?

Why are Abraham’s actions so radical today?

Pastor Mike talked about Abraham having an “abundance mindset.” What does that mean? How do we make decisions based on trusting God?

How does Abraham demonstrate trust in God over anything else?

What can we learn about ourselves from this story?

What can we learn about God from this story?

**GIVING AWAY YOUR TIME AND MONEY IS A
RADICAL IDEA IN THIS CULTURE. AND IT
IS GENERALLY RADICALLY UNPOPULAR.**

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

What did you hear in the sermon that challenged your normal point of view?

What did you hear about the new Christ Church vision that excites you?

How do you think Abraham was feeling as he watched Lot decide what land to claim? How do you feel when you release control of your circumstances to God?

What promises from God are you aware of and inspired by?

What does it mean to have an “others” mindset?
Why is this so radically different today?

What struggles do you have with consumerism?

How can you become a more generous person?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 1

SERMON QUOTE

“God will keep His promises to me. I do not have to fight for my way, for my advantage.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

We can count on God keeping His promises because God can do no other than keep His Word. 2 Timothy 2:13 reads,

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.”

Applying this truth can be challenging, because we often aren’t sure what He has promised, much less what we need. Many things we’d like, though they may be good, are not part of His plan, which is always to transform us - code for living by faith, learning obedience through suffering and counting trials as joy. Not the easiest.

One of God’s compound names, Jehovah-Jireh, “our provider”, was revealed in the greatest crisis of Abraham’s life. He had already learned this truth, evident in his willingness to give Lot the best land and again in his answer to Isaac, “God will provide the lamb.” (Genesis 22:8)

Jireh is a transliteration of the Hebrew verb “to see.” God, as the only One who eternally knows the end from the beginning, is able to see and foresee. Having foreknowledge of our sin, He provided redemption. God’s foreknowledge will be followed by appropriate provision. God will provide what we need, but we need to trust Him.

2 Corinthians 1:20 says,

“For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes.”

If God has promised it, He will do it. We sometimes think He is saying something we want to hear, but He is not. That’s why surrendering to His sovereignty, knowing His Word and learning to recognize His voice is crucial. “Faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

AUTHOR BIO

Stephanie Hayes has been part of the Lake Forest and Highland Park campuses for 6+ years, involved in prayer and global outreach.

PRAYER

Thank You LORD, that You are trustworthy, that You are surely at work in my life to bring about Your good purposes, as I believe and obey You in the power of Your Spirit.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 2

SERMON QUOTE

“Abraham cared for others. He did not fight to get to the head of the line.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

A former professor of mine is known for boldly serving the community. He once shared the question he is asked most: “Why are you doing this?”

In response, he leans forward with a twinkle in his eye and asks, “Do you really want to know?”

In Genesis 14, an old man risks his whole household to rescue his nephew from calamity. Why? What might compel someone to do something so risky, so illogically sacrificial?

The God of the Universe becomes man to rescue His people. Why? Why would He willingly enter into our depravity and despair? Why would He risk so much for us?

Do you *really* want to know?

Nothing but the love of God can stand behind such radical, selfless generosity. We love and risk and serve because we have been unconditionally, illogically, incomprehensibly loved by God Himself.

Abram defeats Lot’s captors against all odds. This impossible victory offers a foretaste of the resurrecting, redemptive victory of Christ. We remember and celebrate His victory every Sunday. Yet we can never fully grasp the power of the Gospel until we listen as He calls us to fight for someone besides ourselves, to share the good news, to bless people in His name, whatever the cost.

Are we people who constantly illicit the question, “why are you doing this?” May we be a church that lives and loves with such generosity that again and again, we get to lean forward with a twinkle in our eyes to ask, “Do you really want to know?”

AUTHOR BIO

Katie Edwardson has served as Director of Guest Services at the Lake Forest campus since she graduated from Denver Seminary and married Eric last July.

PRAYER

God of the universe, Creator and sustainer of all that is; Victorious Redeemer, who set us free-Give us such generosity of Spirit that it overcomes our natural self-centeredness and makes us people who will take risks to share Your radical and unconditional love.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 3

SERMON QUOTE

“Jesus reorganizes our life to be about others. Caring for others. Looking out for others.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

It's interesting to watch how Jesus talks with the woman at the well in John 4. He didn't just meet her needs but He engaged her life and as He did, her story revealed the needs of her heart. One thing we can draw from this passage is that caring for others needs invites us to engage in their life. Caring for others is more than just seeing their needs, it's about thoughtfully engaging in a person's story; like Jesus did with the woman at the well.

The invitation is to transition from looking at others, or simply seeing a need to meet, to truly seeing and hearing a person and their story. See what they do, how they see themselves, what's important to them, what they are proud of, what their objections are, and where they hold their pain. Sometimes meeting needs is less about giving someone something or leading them to an answer and more about simply being with someone and walking with them through a part of their life. As a person shares their story, their deeper needs will reveal themselves.

Engaging with a person and listening to what matters to them creates a “one another event”. An event that not only reaches out to a person in need, but will also change you as God reorganizes your heart and draws you deeper into the caring kind of fellowship that is characteristic of God's people.

Watch, listen, ask, listen, suggest, share, ponder, wonder... and wait in anticipation to see how God will expand your heart and meet the needs of those around you!

AUTHOR BIO

Drew Mjoen and his wife Christine discovered Christ Church in March of 1999 and attend the Christ Church Lake Forest Campus. Drew has taught pre-marital and marriage renewal classes in addition to classes on depression, anxiety and spiritual health. He also enjoys playing electric guitar in several worship bands at Lake Forest and on occasion at Crossroads and Highland Park.

PRAYER

Father God, thank You for sending Jesus to show us how to live thoughtful, caring and listening lives with one another, drawing deep into fellowship with You and them.

"I will run in the way of Your commands for You enlarge my heart." Psalm 119:32

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 4

SERMON QUOTE

“We are going to be reminded of a pretty important truth – first we make our decisions and then our decisions make us. Choices matter.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

One thing that has always amazed me about God - He let's us decide.

When I think about my daughter, who is just a few months shy of her 3rd birthday, letting her make her own choice is often very difficult for me. There are some decisions I find easy to let her make (i.e. what to wear, what toy to play with). But I also find myself not letting her make other decisions (i.e. wearing her seatbelt, ice cream for breakfast, playing with knives). When I know what is best and she does not, I make the choice for her.

Joshua 24:15 says:

*But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you,
then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.*

God giving us freedom to choose is a remarkable thing. He knows what is best. He knows what happens if we don't choose to follow Him. Yet, He lets us decide and then live with those decisions.

There is a very stark difference between God and me, and me and my 2 year old daughter. I won't let her make a choice that will cause harm (at least not yet). God on the other hand will let us go down a path that may not be what is best for us. He will let us make a decision that will shape our eternity, good or bad.

Don't lose sight of this important truth. God is in complete control of all things, but He is letting you make the decisions that will ultimately decide your fate. Yes, your choice does matter.

AUTHOR BIO

Dan Syvertsen has been with Christ Church for 6 years, and served as Campus Pastor for Highland Park for the last 2 1/2 years.

PRAYER

Sovereign God, thank you that no matter what poor decisions I have made, you tell me that you will forgive anything that I sincerely bring to you. So now I not only bring you what I've poorly chosen but also why....You tell me that you can use all things for good for those who love you, so I am trusting that no matter the consequences of what happens next you will walk with me. Help me to acknowledge you in ALL my ways so that my path is established by you, for you and always walked with you.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 5

SERMON QUOTE

“I am not going to dance around this. Giving away your time and money is a radical idea in this culture. And it is generally radically unpopular.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

One of the reasons giving is not popular is that the invitation to “give” is an invitation to live by faith. Living by faith has an element of unknown that can create fear, insecurity or anxiety. I want to suggest there is something we need to know before we can give.

A former teacher of mine adopted two young boys from a malnourished orphanage in Russia. When they first came to his home, at every meal they would try to stuff portions of the meal in their pockets or in small holes under the high chair. It took him a few weeks, but he realized that these boys, his new sons, were conditioned to try to hold onto food because they did not know when their next meal would be.

He explained what a powerful day it was when the boys stopped storing food away. There was no more cleaning out the holes under the high chair.

His sons finally trusted his provision. They started to live with faith. We could say, they knew they had a loving father who knew their needs and would provide for tomorrow.

“Giving” takes great faith, but the life of faith is where we find God. He meets us there and shows us who He is, a loving Father who knows our needs. When we know that, we can give our time, talent and resources.

AUTHOR BIO

Ben Dockery is the Campus Pastor at Christ Church Lake Forest. He has been attending the Church for over 2 years and recently joined the staff. He and his wife, Julie have three daughters, Abigail, Emma and Annie.

PRAYER

Faithful Father, search me and show me where I fearfully tuck away what you've given me today so that I'll have something for tomorrow. Bring to mind all the ways that you love me and are generous to me...thank you. Help me to trust your love so that my generosity is evidence that I am putting my full security on you for everything and so that you will be praised by what others receive from me.

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

2 Corinthians 9:11



WEEK 3

REACH TO GOD

WEEKEND SERIES NOTES

DATE: March 3/4

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15

“I WANT YOU TO LEAN IN. IF YOU ARE HOLDING BACK—HELD BACK BY FEAR OR WHATEVER, I WANT YOU TO SEE THAT GOD WALKED THROUGH THE FIRE FOR YOU. HE WENT FIRST. HE IS ALL IN.”

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WARM UP QUESTIONS

What has your experience been with Christ Church or other churches? How have you been involved in the past?

What risks have you taken during your life? How did you feel about it? What was the outcome?

BIBLE EXPLORATION: READ GENESIS 15:1-21

About this Story

We see the intimacy between God and Abraham, as well as the assurance of promises God has for Abraham.

Abraham doubts and asks for confirmation.

God goes first, offers a “contract,” but also takes His time.

God’s plans are not always easy, as we see with the future God talks about for the Israelites. One that will have them suffering for a long time.

God promises to both be there the whole time with the people and to see the promise through to the end.

Questions

Why does God start with the words “do not be afraid?”

Do you understand Abraham’s reaction? How do you think you would feel if you were Abraham?

How do you think Abraham felt when having a dream about 400 years of his people being enslaved and mistreated?

Why do you think God takes His time in revealing and unrolling His plans for us?

What fears do you have that you need to trust God with?

**“ABRAHAM WINS GOD. THAT IS A LOT
BETTER THAN WINNING THE LOTTERY.”**

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

What did you hear in the sermon that challenged your normal point of view?

What did you hear about the new Christ Church vision that excites you?

How can you lean into God’s plans for your life? What is He asking you to do?

In what way does God demonstrate His love for you?
How does Jesus’ death show us that God is all in?

What does being a follower of Jesus look like in everyday life?

How can this discussion about Abraham
help our Church reach the vision God is giving us?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 1

SERMON QUOTE

“Fear is a big topic in the Bible, and not fearing because we trust God, will come up over and over and over again. The most common way Jesus greets His friends is, ‘Fear not.’”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Dear fear,

You’ve been a tormenting influence from start to finish. You’ve told me lies. You are a miserable, wretched companion and I am no longer willing to be involved with you.

I am writing you this letter to let you know that from this point forward I will not fear. I have a friend named Jesus and He has promised to never leave or forsake me. He is all powerful and much greater than you are. You can come against me but Jesus lives in me. Although I cannot prevent you from coming to visit, know that you will be ignored. I am far too busy now fellowshiping with my Savior, Jesus, and developing an intimate relationship with Him to give you any of my time. He is teaching me a new way to live.

I also want to inform you that since I have so much experience with you and know how self-defeating it is to listen to you that I now intend to tell as many people as I can what a thief and a liar you are. Thank you for driving me to Jesus! You made me so miserable that I sought a way to be free from you. Jesus met me where I was and set me free. Should you decide to waste my time and try to visit even after receiving my letter, I am letting you know ahead of time that you will be met by faith in God and a determination that I will not fear!

AUTHOR BIO

Kathy Ferguson has attended Christ Church Lake Forest for 30 years, Community Bible Study for 30 years, leads Beth Moore Bible Study, Prison ministry at Lake County Jail for 9 years and is a certified Chaplain.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for your Spirit within me who is not a spirit of fear but of love, power and sound mind. Help me to answer the one question you bring to my fear-clouded mind, “Do you trust me?” Help me answer honestly and may I be able to say, “I trust my God who is with me, and loves me, so that I can declare, “Whom or what will I fear when my God is for me and is my ever present help?”

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 2

SERMON QUOTE

“It’s not just that God is going to keep Abraham safe. God promises to bless Abraham. He says, ‘I am your reward.’ Abraham wins God. That is a lot better than winning the lottery.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Abraham was not just after God’s treasures. He was after God. How do we know this?

If Abraham had only been after the treasure, he would never have left Ur with his father Terah. Ur was the prosperous, urban center of a strong Mesopotamian state. Ur had all the modern conveniences of its day: schools, libraries, two story houses with running water, highly developed legal systems and fertile land for grazing livestock due to adequate rainfall and three major sources of water. But Abraham left Ur with his father Terah and traveled nearly 600 miles northwest to Heran.

If Abraham had only been after the treasure, when Lot needed space from his uncle, Abraham would have grabbed the fertile, well-watered pastures of the Jordan Valley and given the leftover, more sparsely covered, higher ground to Lot.

But Abraham gave the best land to Lot.

If Abraham had only been after the treasure, when the king of Sodom paid him a visit and offered him the spoils from the battle to free nephew Lot, Abraham would have grabbed the bounty.

But Abraham refused the bounty, saying “I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich’.” (Genesis 14:23)

Abraham was not after God’s treasure. He was after God. God was the prize.

If you had been Abraham, what do you think you would have done?

AUTHOR BIO

Ruth Senter has been attending Christ Church for 22 years and served as Women’s Ministry Director for about 2 1/2 years. She also taught Christ Church Lake Forest’s Women’s Morning Bible Break for many years.

PRAYER

Lord, Giver of every good and perfect gift, thank you for all the blessing you put and around my life. Guard me from loving the blessings more than obeying where you are calling me go. When I draw near to you with prayers and petitions, I remind my soul that what I want above anything else is YOU.

You satisfy us with your unfailing love, that we may sing and be glad all our day. Psalm 90:14

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 3

SERMON QUOTE

“Genesis 15:6 - some have called it the key verse in the Old Testament. Because it shows how we get right with God. Even in the Old Testament it is faith not works.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Abram is living in a place of tension. God has promised to bless him abundantly, to entrust a land to him, to make his descendants as numerous as the stars. Yet he stands before us aging and childless, waiting for promises to become reality. Does that resonate with you today? Are you waiting, perhaps for opportunity or healing or relationship? Are you living between a promise and its fulfillment? Are you beginning to doubt God's faithfulness?

*“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”
(Genesis 15:6).*

Abram knew God's character and trusted that God's promises were true and possible. Paul tells us that:

“No unbelief made [Abram] waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.” (Romans 4:20-21)

The faithfulness and generosity of our God know no bounds. In fact, God may surpass our expectations in ways we could never anticipate. Through the biblical narrative, we watch Him turn a childless man into a nation that will bless all people through Jesus Christ. We can trust that we are saved by faith alone, as an undeserved gift from our gracious, unconditionally-loving God. In the blessing of salvation we receive in Christ, we can know this amazing God intimately, now and forever.

Reflect on God's faithfulness to His people and to you personally. Is He inviting you into deeper trust or surrender, to relinquish the desire to prove or earn or control? He alone is worthy of our trust and able to make us righteous in Christ by His Spirit.

AUTHOR BIO

Katie Edwardson has served as Director of Guest Services at the Lake Forest campus since she graduated from Denver Seminary and married Eric last July.

PRAYER

Father, as the Potter of my life help me to wait and to yield to the press of your hands shaping me for what you have in mind. Let me recall your faithfulness, using my doubt to draw me closer to you, so that I can get near enough to remember that who I become in the waiting is what is important to you; building my faith to fully trust that you can and will accomplish what is far better than I can ever conceive.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 4

SERMON QUOTE

“It’s worth noting that doubts need to be managed. We do not need to fear them, but we shouldn’t ignore them – they can lead us to wrestle with life and faith and God in ways that take us deeper.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

I remember watching wrestling growing up with two brothers on Saturday night. As the sister, it was quite difficult to appreciate the value of these big overgrown men flinging each other around in a ring. As impressed as I was with Hulk Hogan, (I mean, he WAS entertaining!), I had to admit, I hardly could appreciate the value of wrestling. What is the significance of a headlock?

Yet as I read in Genesis, the story of Jacob wrestling with God until God blessed him, I realized that God has a purpose of using that specific terminology. In wrestling, one has to struggle to look for places to conquer, subdue and dominate one’s opponent. One has to surrender. It’s strenuous and requires skill, strength and endurance. And as much as we hate to admit that we doubt, wrestling with doubts is an important part of our spiritual growth.

I have found that putting my stuff out there before God in prayer, my disappointments, doubts, hurts, etc. have strengthened my faith in ways that denying my doubts never could have. God is not shocked by my thoughts. He longs for me to bring them to Him, and wrestle with His Word, until I inevitably, surrender in faith and belief. Won’t you grab a Bible now, and take your doubts, questions, and fears to “the mat” with God? He will win...and so will you.

AUTHOR BIO

Sandra Zamble has attended the Christ Church Lake Forest campus since 2001. She is involved in the 1-to-1 Care team, gospel choir and altar prayer service ministry. Her husband, Tony, serves as an elder at Christ Church.

PRAYER

Father, help me to realize that when you ask me to love you with all my heart, mind and strength, you are not asking for just the best parts of my heart, my thinking, and capacities but All, even the parts that are dark, worried, fearful, weak, doubting...Help me to be far more honest with you, knowing that you already see everything within me and that my wrestling to bring it all before you is a an act of trust that brings blessing to our relationship.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 5

SERMON QUOTE

"I want you to lean in. If you are holding back – held back by fear or whatever – I want you to see that God walked through the fire for you. He went first. He is all in."

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

You are asleep and you have a dream. You are frantically running along a river bank through the thick, rocky brush trying to escape a fire behind you. You're getting scratched, bruised, poked, and are tripping, falling, bleeding, fearful. Out of the corner of your eye you see a raft floating down the river. There is a man wearing a white robe standing in the front of it, his arms outstretched as if on a cross, beckoning you to join him, to jump on and fall into his arms. You think no, I've got this. I can do it. I'm strong, smart, fast. The raft is passing you by. You realize that you're exhausted, broken, helpless, hopeless. You jump out and instantly you're on the raft with Jesus! From fear to faith, panic to peace, wounded to healed, deceived to truth, damaged to delivered, divided to united, distracted to purpose, lost to loved! You suddenly wake up and realize it wasn't just a dream, it's your life! You have to make a choice to be all in, on board, following Jesus. Choose wisely beloved.

William Booth, founder of the Salvation army in 1865 in London wrote:

"I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be: religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God and heaven without hell."

AUTHOR BIO

Kathy Ferguson has attended Christ Church Lake Forest for 30 years, Community Bible Study for 30 years, leads Beth Moore Bible Study, Prison ministry at Lake County Jail for 9 years, and is a certified Chaplain.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that the invitation to fall into your arms is always there for me. I want to I relinquish running from you and running ahead of you. Today I choose to believe and receive everything you have for me in exchange for my weariness and brokenness. Thank you that daily I can choose to live awake to the beautiful reality of your life within me.

*Create in me a clean heart, O' God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10*



WEEK 4

REACH WITH GOD

WEEKEND SERIES NOTES

DATE: March 10/11

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 14

**“WE GIVE BECAUSE WE
BELIEVE THAT THE LOCAL
CHURCH IS THE HOPE OF
THE WORLD.”**

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WARM UP QUESTIONS

Do you remember saving as a child for something you really wanted? What was it?

What are you most inclined to spend money on?

Why do people give to different organizations and people?

BIBLE EXPLORATION: READ GENESIS 14:17-24

About this Story

This is the first time we see the concept of a tithe (giving 10% to the Church). It is formalized by law under Moses.

For Abraham, it is a natural response to God's generosity to him.

After Abraham gave away, he had an opportunity to receive. He refuses the offer, relying only on God.

His refusal was because he had already promised God not to take anything. He was sticking to his commitment and trusting God.

Questions

What amazes you most about Abraham's decision to give away a 10th of everything?

Malachi 3 talks about withholding tithes as "robbing God." Why does God use such strong language?

How do you feel about giving back to God?

Pastor Mike says the tithe is a "starting point." Is that how you view it? What is your view on giving?

“LEARNING TO **LISTEN TO GOD AND **EXAMINE**
YOUR LIFE AND WEIGH YOUR CONVICTIONS AND
MAKE THIS KIND OF DECISION IS **HARD** BUT IT’S
ALSO ONE OF THE WAYS WE **GROW**.”**

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

What did you hear in the sermon that challenged your normal point of view?

What did you hear about the new Christ Church vision that excites you?

Mike gave 7 reasons he and Sherri give, which did you resonate with?

1. It’s God’s money
2. He gave His son to die for us
3. We are commanded to give
4. The local church is the hope of the world
5. Keeps priorities straight
6. We want God’s blessing (which is not bought)
7. We get to give

What is your giving story? Why do you give?

What has prevented you from giving to the Church in the past or the present?

What about the new Christ Church vision are you most looking forward to seeing happen? How can you give to help make it happen?

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 1

SERMON QUOTE

“We give because we believe that the local church is the hope of the world – uniquely equipped to help people face their future, and uniquely equipped to help the world work today.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Key questions need to be asked of any investment, such as, what is the return? What is the past performance? What are the risks associated with it? Basically, is it a wise or prudent investment?

The same questions can be asked as we think about investing in the church. Is God’s church still positioned to make an impact in our changing world?

Do churches have problems, yes. Do people have bad experiences, yes. There is no question that sinful behaviors plague the church and always will until Christ returns. Still, the church is not a new idea, and ultimately, God tells us He will build the church and the gates of hell will not overcome it (Matthew 16:18). The church wins.

In God’s wisdom, He set up outposts for the gospel, or churches, where people can walk with one another in faith, hope and love. People are known and cared for. People are invited into the community and experience grace and forgiveness. People are challenged to pursue God’s will. People powerfully experience the gospel.

We get to be involved in God’s plan for the world, that is, to see the church take the beautiful, loving and powerful gospel to a hurting and broken world. It is both prudent and joyful to bank on the church.

AUTHOR BIO

Ben Dockery is the Campus Pastor at Christ Church Lake Forest. He has been attending the Church for over 2 years and recently joined the staff. He and his wife, Julie have three daughters, Abigail, Emma and Annie.

PRAYER

Lord, forgive me when I forget that investments in your priorities here on earth are sound, reward-bearing investments for eternal life later. Thank you for all the tangible ways you make available for me to make investments in the lives and souls of people, revealing that Love is present in your Church here, now, and, forever.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 2

SERMON QUOTE

“Having enough money has a lot more to do with who you are than with what you make.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

What exactly would it take for you to be content? Is your contentment based on things that are temporal or eternal?

John D. Rockefeller, at one point considered the world’s richest man, was once asked, “How much money is enough?” He responded, “Just a little bit more.”

That candid response would likely be the response of many people, because many are convinced that just a little more money would make them happy. For others, it’s not money. It’s a promotion or a relationship or some other fleeting measure. Whatever it is, if it is not of eternal value, it is sure to leave us empty and discontent.

We will only be content when we are fulfilling the purpose for which we were created. The first question in the Westminster Confession asks “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is “... to glorify God and enjoy Him eternally.” As long as we are pursuing our own vision of purpose, we will never be content.

Contentment is often evasive because our desires are misdirected to temporal rather than eternal matters. And it is not a matter of our desires being too strong. C. S. Lewis argues that;

“Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around about with drink and sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Wouldn’t it be nice to have a holiday by the sea?

AUTHOR BIO

Mark Neerhof and his wife Betty have been members of Christ Church since 2006.

PRAYER

Lord, thank you that deep, true contentment is found in You. I confess I have settled for too little by wanting and pursuing too much of what is outside of what you know will most satisfy me. Help me to want what you want, so that I can learn to be content with this life and free to pursue what matters most for life in your Kingdom.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 3

SERMON QUOTE

“Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to be the boy who gave Jesus the bread and fish that Christ used to feed 5000?”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

When the little boy left home with his food for the day he had very specific plans for the bread and fish. He was going to eat them. What other purpose could they fulfill? He had his food, for his stomach, nothing else. That is what we do with our possessions, we give them limits on what they can accomplish. Whether it be our time, our money or our skills, we don't expect to do more with them than simply meet our own needs.

But, we have a God whose dreams are bigger than our dreams. He sees our time, our money, our skills and calls us to do more than we can ever dream or imagine. That little boy turned over his own food, along with his own plans for the food, to Jesus. I don't think he expected it to feed 5000 people, he simply surrendered.

When my gifts are put into the hands of the ultimate giver, there is no limit to what can be accomplished. He will take what you hand over to him and he will reach the needs of more people than you can on your own. Don't hold back. Who knows what you will get to be part of if you just surrender.

AUTHOR BIO

Dan Syvertsen has been with Christ Church for 6 years, and served as Campus Pastor for Highland Park for the last 2 1/2 years.

PRAYER

God of Wonder, I confess that I have thought, “I do not have enough to make a difference or that surely someone else will offer what is needed”. Please help me to trust you by releasing what I cling to by calculating the cost, when you are the great multiplier of what I offer, whether it’s feeding multitudes or as I will discover later, I’ve ministered to Jesus in the least of them.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 4

SERMON QUOTE

“I’ll say it again – God doesn’t need our money. He can speak things into existence. But we have a chance to give.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Remember in Mark 10, the rich man who wanted to inherit eternal life? Mark says, “Jesus looked at him and loved him...” then asked the man to give his wealth to the poor and follow Jesus. When the rich man heard this his “face fell and he went away sad because he had great wealth.” Jesus loved this man, asked the man to give, and join Jesus. But he didn’t. It’s a sad story.

I wonder what this man’s life would have become had he given and followed? What stories we may have read about him? What love he would have realized and shared with Jesus? What lives he would have touched...if only he had given, and participated with Jesus.

I wonder what giving opportunities I have refused? What kind of partnership with God have I left behind? No doubt, God can accomplish His desires without us. But how amazing that He would rather have us join Him in the unfolding of His will. On our own, we can only scratch the surface of what God wants to share with us. If only we will give whatever He asks, to discover that letting go of what we want, will reveal that there is so much more that God has for us.

In Luke 6 Jesus reminds us, *Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together running over, will be poured into your lap for with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*

Try to listen for the places that God is calling you into partnership. Give, give just a bit more than is comfortable for you. Try to find more comfort in the stretching of your partnership with God.

AUTHOR BIO

Drew Mjoen and his wife Christine discovered Christ Church in March of 1999 and attend the Christ Church Lake Forest Campus. Drew has taught premarital and marriage renewal classes in addition to classes on depression, anxiety and spiritual health. He also enjoys playing electric guitar in several worship bands at Lake Forest and on occasion at Crossroads and Highland Park.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that you look on me with love. Let me remember that when, like the rich man, you ask me to do things beyond my capacity, you have a loving reason for this; you want me to depend on you to do what I can not, so that I can discover more of what you can do. Thank you that the impossible asks are invitations to join you into deeper partnership with you, full of possibilities for miracles.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL | DAY 5

SERMON QUOTE

“Learning to listen to God and examine your life and weigh your convictions and make this kind of decision is hard but it’s also one of the ways we grow.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Out of all the many mysteries in Scripture, the one I keep coming back to is God’s invitation to collaborate. He invites humans into His redemptive plan by asking us to partner with Him through prayer, ministry, engaging our gifts in the world around us and, of course, by giving.

Giving isn’t just an obligation; it’s an invitation to collaborate with the God of the Universe. Honestly, God can, and will, accomplish His plan without you and me or our resources, but He’s asking us to be a part of it. He wants us to be involved in His redemptive work.

When I think of listening to God in giving, I think of walking the streets of Chicago and listening to the loud voice in my head that’s telling me to buy the homeless woman on the corner a meal or to give her my mittens or to hear her story. Sometimes we’re confronted by need and God’s voice seems to be on a loudspeaker in our heads.

Sometimes, though, God’s voice is much quieter. Sometimes it’s a little tug when you’re looking over your checkbook at the end of the month. What if in that moment God is asking you to collaborate with Him in His redemptive work in the world? What would it look like to listen to His invitation? Seize the opportunity to listen to God and to give decidedly to His Kingdom out of your wealth in time, money, talent, love and all your gifts.

AUTHOR BIO

Joanna Tong and her husband Stefan have been attending Christ Church for more than 3 years. She serves as a small group leader with the SHYG High School group and runs Sisterhood for High School girls.

PRAYER

Lord, let the truth that you don't need me, but instead want me, sink deep into me. I am wanted. I am invited to participate in your life and work in this world. Please attune my ears to hear your voice and to respond by offering anything you ask, knowing it was all from you in the first place, so I can experience the joy in collaborating with you.



WEEK 5

LET'S REACH

WEEKEND SERIES NOTES

DATE: March 17/18

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 18

**“OUR FIRST GOAL HAS BEEN
THAT **ONE HUNDRED PERCENT**
OF US PARTICIPATE, BECAUSE
ULTIMATELY THIS IS AS MUCH
ABOUT WHAT **GOD** WANTS TO
DO **IN US** AS WHAT HE WANTS
TO DO **THROUGH US.**”**



FAMILY CONVERSATIONS


The “**Family Conversations**” section of the guidebook is designed for parents and children to go through together. There is one conversation prompt for each week of the REACH initiative. During the week, read the scripture and go through the questions to start good conversations with your family about generosity.

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS: WEEK 1

DATE: Week of February 18

TOPIC: Follow: The Cheerful Giver

 **READ TOGETHER:** 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

 **KEY CONCEPTS:** God is generous, and He wants us to be generous too. One way that He rewards our generosity is by taking care of our physical needs. When God gives things to us, He wants us to give them to others. And one of the best things about being generous is that when people see our generosity, they will thank God.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you share a time when you were a cheerful giver or when someone gave cheerfully to you?
2. What does God promise to do to those who are generous?
3. What will others do because of our generosity (vs. 11)?

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS: WEEK 2



DATE: Week of February 25

TOPIC: Trust: An Unexpected Blessing



READ TOGETHER: Ruth 2 (or provide a recap of the story)



KEY CONCEPTS: Boaz was a successful farmer with plenty to eat. He also had people who worked for him in his fields. When he noticed a poor woman picking up the grain that was leftover after the harvest, he told his workers to leave extra grain in the field for her. Boaz chose to be generous to Ruth even though he didn't know her! And he trusted that God would give him what he needs. We should be generous with what God has given us to people who need it and trust that He will give us what we need.



FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:


1. How was Boaz generous to Ruth and her mother-in-law?
2. Who are the poor in our community?
3. How can we be like Boaz and intentionally consider those less fortunate?

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS: WEEK 3

DATE: Week of March 4

TOPIC: Practice: What's extra?

 **READ TOGETHER:** Luke 12:13-21

 **KEY CONCEPTS:** Jesus told a story about a rich man who had such a large harvest from his crops that he had to build more storehouses to hold all his grain and his many possessions.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus say about wealth in verse 15?
2. What happened to the rich man who stored up things for himself?
3. Does our family have anything stored up in our house that we could give to someone who needs it?

HANDS ON ACTIVITY

Practice generosity by discovering what you have extra, package it up and donate it. Some ideas:

1. **Food**-take some food to the Northern Illinois Food Bank at North Suburban Center (440 Keller Dr., Park City, IL 60085)
2. **Clothing**-pack up clothes that have been outgrown or not being worn and take them to Love INC (339 N. Lakewood Ave., Waukegan, IL 60085)
3. **Blankets and other household items**-PADS makes starter kits for those in need. (1800 Grand Ave. Waukegan, IL 60085)

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS: WEEK 4



DATE: Week of March 11

TOPIC: Surrender: Your Money or Your Life



READ TOGETHER: Matthew 19:16-30



KEY CONCEPTS: The rich young man had lived a very righteous life, but he had one problem—he loved money too much. Jesus asked him to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. Jesus did that to show that you have to love God more than you love anything else. God looks at what is in our hearts, not just at what we do. And God wants us to love Him more than anything!



FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:


1. Why did the rich young man walk away sad in the story?
2. Is it harder to share if you have a lot or a little?
3. If you had a penny and someone else had a dollar and you both lost all of your money, who lost more? How does that connect with the story?
4. How is God asking us to surrender what we want in order to love Him the most?

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS: WEEK 5

DATE: Week of March 18

TOPIC: Commit: Treasures in Heaven

 **READ TOGETHER:** Matthew 6:19-21;24

 **KEY CONCEPTS:** The “rich” of this present world are to share their wealth with those who are less fortunate. In doing so, we please God and will receive a reward from Him in heaven.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are your treasures?
2. What can happen to the treasures that we store here on earth?
3. What do you think Jesus would have done with His money if He had been rich?
4. How can we fill up our treasure chests in heaven?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

GOALS OF THE ACTIVITY

Children will discover the dignity of working and earning money themselves
The principle of working will combat the attitude of entitlement Children will come to understand that money won't bring them contentment or fulfillment.

HOW IT WORKS (Packets with 3 zipper bags are available in the lobby)

Kids are paid for completing specific chores. The money is divided between GIVE and SPEND bags for younger children and GIVE, SAVE, SPEND bags for older kids.

GIVE= can be used in the offering instead of you giving them money

SAVE= a long-term SPEND envelope

SPEND=fair game; anything they want to buy within reason!

TIPS

1. There should be some unpaid chores that your child does because they're a member of the family-it's an act of love to help with the dishes.
2. For younger kids, limit the number of chores to around three jobs.
3. The job should feel like a big accomplishment, but not so huge that it is impossible to complete.
4. Assign a dollar amount to each chore.
5. Young children need to be paid as soon as the chore is completed but older kids could be paid weekly (teaches delayed gratification and patience!)
6. You will probably need to work alongside them and that is OK!
7. Make the payment visual. Kids are visual learners and there is great excitement in seeing the bag fill with dollar bills!

JOB EXAMPLES FOR KIDS 3-6

Pick up toys
Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket
Make their bed
Match socks in the clean laundry
Set the dinner table - with your help
Help carry in light groceries

JOB EXAMPLES FOR OLDER KIDS

Feed pets
Vacuum and sweep
Sort, fold and put away laundry
Load the dishwasher
Water plants
Brush snow off car
Shovel the sidewalk
Clean the bathroom
Babysit younger siblings

“BRETHREN, I DO NOT REGARD MYSELF AS HAVING LAID
HOLD OF IT YET; BUT ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING
WHAT LIES BEHIND AND **REACHING** FORWARD TO WHAT
LIES AHEAD, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE
PRIZE OF THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

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