

West Valley Church
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Michael O'Neill

Here For Good Celebration!

Today is a day to celebrate! Last week we wrapped up three years of our faith and generosity effort called **Here For Good**. This has been quite the journey, hasn't it? Most of you know that we've been in this together in order to eliminate our debt and to raise as much as possible to renovate some of the decades-old parts of our great facility (like the one you are sitting in!) – but it has been about much, much more than that. There have been many, many victories that God has accomplished through you in these last three years that you might not realize. That's because **Here For Good** has been about far, far more than giving. Giving was just the tangible action that would demonstrate our faith, our unity, and our commitment to what God wants to do here through West Valley Church. So today is about way more than announcing money raised; it is about celebrating all that God has been doing through you and your faith obedience, so that God can do all he intends to do to achieve his vision for our church and community. Today we are going to celebrate so many wonderful things. We are celebrating what has been accomplished so that we can celebrate what *will* be accomplished.

When my parents were in assisted living in Oregon, we were eating lunch together in the café, and I saw an elderly gentleman who was eating at a table with his family, and they were celebrating his 100th birthday, so I stopped to ask him about it. He told me that his birthday was actually the *next* week, so I said to the older man, "you're celebrating a little early, aren't you?" The older man looked back at me and said, "At my age, son, every day is a celebration!"

So in a way, like that hundred-year-old man, *we* are celebrating every day and we are celebrating early, too. We are celebrating what was, what is, and what is *ahead* for us!

We've been inspired throughout **Here For Good** by this passage from Psalm 37:3-6 –

Trust the Lord and do good;
live in the land, and farm faithfulness.
Enjoy the Lord,
and he will give what your heart asks.
Commit your way to the Lord!
Trust him! He will act
and will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,
your justice like high noon. (Psalm 37:3-6, ceb)

That verse calls us to live in the land – to be **Here For Good**. It means that we are not going anywhere; we are going to continue to bring the Kingdom of God to West Valley until Jesus returns. And in all that time, we are going to continue to do good – we are here to do good, for good – we are here for the Gospel.

I'd like us to hear from one of our young families that has participated in **Here For Good**, that really talk about *why* we all got involved. Watch this video from the Robins.

With people like Joe and Bethany and *you*, it makes it easy to see why West Valley Church is such a great church! The testimony of Joe and Bethany, and the others you will hear, really do reflect all of our experiences as we've stepped out in faith for the sake of God's mission and vision for this church.

What we want to do in this time is identify just some of the wins – some of the victories that we've experienced together. That's why you are hearing stories. But I know you also want to hear the total of our giving over these three years, don't you?

So let me start by saying this:

One of our goals was to eliminate our debt. When we began this effort, our church was carrying a debt load of \$1.1 million dollars (and that was what was left on a debt that began in the late 90s). But our payments on that debt meant that approximately \$100,000 *every year* was servicing the mortgage. We needed to be free from debt and begin moving those dollars from mortgage to ministry.

Of course you all know by now that the first Sunday that we had planned and prepared to begin our three years of giving was in March of 2021, and we were shut down due to Covid. **Here For Good** seemed dead in the water. So your Leadership Team – your pastors and church board – began praying and discussing how we were going to move forward. On top of everything that the pandemic did to us as a church, we had to figure out what to do about **Here For Good** – it hadn't even started yet, and we were suddenly shut down. But we regrouped, we prayed, we trusted God and you, and we moved our start date to May – three years ago on *this Sunday*. In the beginning we didn't even have the capacity to live-stream services, so we had to pre-record our services – all from our own homes. Each of us who were involved in some part of the video service would record our parts from our homes on our phones or iPads, and then we'd send them to Pastor Jason and Mike Broom who would edit them together and then send the link out to everybody. That continued while Nathan Durnan, Mike Broom, and others built our studio for live-streaming worship services. Finally in October we were able to begin meeting in person – but even then, only with a handful of people at a time. It really wasn't until after the first of the year in 2022 that we could begin rebuilding our times together in worship. Even then, there were still many people who could not join us because they had other health issues.

So out of that first twelve months of giving toward **Here For Good**, we were only able to *all* meet together in person for about 3 months. And yet...despite all of that, God moved us to give. So much so, that within that first pandemic year we paid off *our entire debt!* I will come back to that, but would you like to know the grand total to date that we've all given for **Here For Good** over these three years? Here it is:

\$1,573,941.36

That is amazing! With God's gracious provision, we did that!!

And we paid off the debt in the first year of it!

Because of that miracle event of paying off the debt, that made our giving go even further! So let me share some of the many other victories accomplished. Remember that our goal with **Here For Good** was to raise \$1.1 million for debt, and \$500,000 for renovations. Unfortunately, \$500,000 three years ago went a whole lot farther than it does today. But here's what happened:

Because we paid down the debt so fast, the final payoff was *not* the \$1.1 million that we projected

it to be. Instead, it turned out the...

Actual Mortgage payout: \$904,049.09

In addition, because we were able to pay it off so quickly, we saved even more on interest payments than we thought there was going to be. We actually saved...

\$359,235.41 in interest!

So not only did we get out of debt, we saved the church all that additional money!

But the victories don't stop! Remember, we hoped to raise \$500,000 for renovations. But because we were able to pay off the mortgage so quickly, and because we didn't have to pay as much interest, we were actually able to raise *more* than \$500,000 for renovations; instead our...

Total raised for renovations \$669,892.27!

So even though we were short of our goal of 1.6m by a mere \$26,000, we actually achieved *more* than we had planned! Isn't that amazing!

But wait – there's more (like a late-night commercial for steak knives' "but wait – there's more..."). Because of the pandemic, (I don't know if you remember, but) the government provided assistance to organizations and businesses through what was called the "Paycheck Protection Program," and then the "Employee Retention Credit." Because we maintained our employees through the pandemic, the government awarded grants and credits. Now, I know some businesses took advantage of that from the government and took more than they should have, but we applied for only what we could morally justify.

So, the point is that because of your faithfulness and your faithful giving during the pandemic, we gained *additional* funds beyond **Here For Good**. What does that mean? It meant that we had funds available to replace a broken down \$15,000 air conditioning unit. It meant we were able to patch and paint our church parking lot, which was way overdue, and which cost over \$30,000. It meant that we were able to purchase equipment so we could begin live streaming – over \$20,000. We were able to address all those urgent needs without having to ask you to give more. Now if you remember, we used to do those projects over the summer and use building fund dollars, and then encourage you to give to replenish that fund. But we didn't want to ask you to do that while you were also giving toward Here For Good. So the Lord provided funds for us to keep this place running, even while it was shut down and breaking down!!

There are still some of those funds available, but you need to know that the Leadership Team is being cautious and wise about those funds in order to be good stewards of the resources God has provided our great church through all of this.

I don't intend to turn this celebration into a business meeting! What I want you to hear in all of that is a couple of things: first, God has done amazing things through your faith-filled giving and made those dollars go much farther than they should have! Secondly, your Leadership Team are incredibly wise stewards of the resources of West Valley Church. Those are more victories!

Let's hear from another couple who participated in **Here For Good**. They too have an inspiring story to tell. Watch this video from the Mapes.

Let me tell you some exciting, amazing "stats" on how all of us participated together during **Here For Good**.

The **total number of people who participated – approximately 340.**

Of that, there were...

approximately 80 individuals & 130 couples/households.

That's a lot of people, a lot of households, a lot of families! That, my friends, is another great victory! So many people stepping out in faith!

In addition, this has never been about amounts. It has always been about each of us praying, pledging, and giving as God leads us to step out in faith. So a six-figure gift is just as faith-filled as a one-dollar gift, right? Each amount given is a victory in faith.

So yes, **the smallest single gift size – (was) \$1.00**

That's on one end of the spectrum. On the other end...

the largest single gift size – (was) \$100,000

That tells you that we have a broad spectrum of capacity to give!

Along those same lines, we can tell you that over the total three years of giving...

the largest total individual/household contribution – \$125,600

When you hear that, you might think that we had some folks who gave large amounts, but that's not the case. The reality is that the...

average gift size – \$430

That's the average amount given, whether it was one time giving or giving regularly throughout the three years.

When it comes to the average *total* amount over the three years, the...

average total individual/household contribution – \$ 6,550

The thing I want you to see is that *it was all of us*, doing our part as we are able. So this was the...

Age range – PreK-90's

That range literally represents children from 4 years old to teens, college students/young adults and up to senior adults. It was all of us doing our part!

So the number of households who gave regularly throughout Here For Good – 58 (that's giving regularly – whether monthly or weekly).

But here's something else that really indicates the amount of faith that so many of us exercised; when many of our families reached their pledged goal, many of us continued to give in faith. In fact, of the 58 households who gave regularly, an amazing...

48 households gave beyond their pledge amount!

My friends, those are all victories that speak of our expanding faith and God's great provision. We all stepped out in faith, all of us in the ways we could, at all of our ages, in all of our homes.

What also amazed me is the number of people who weren't with us when we started Here For Good, but stepped in wholeheartedly. That too is a victory. Here's one of those testimonies.

Watch this video from the Kramers.

When God's people come together like that, and commit themselves together to what God is calling them to do, when God's people step out in faith like this...there's so much more that happens than just reaching a goal. God does things in the heart of that church. Remember our passage that was the theme of Here For Good:

Trust the Lord and do good;
live in the land, and farm faithfulness. (Psalm 37:3, ceb)

When we trust the Lord and do good, God is able to plant good things into the soil of the church that brings forth fruit in so many ways.

Let me share a couple more victories that we've seen as a result of your faithfulness to God.

Of course, we are blessed to have an amazing pastoral staff team. And we are excited that, in one month, we will have the addition of Israel Villalobos to lead us in new areas of our English-speaking worship, but in addition, he will help us begin our Spanish language worship services. God has provided us with the leadership we need to move even more certainly toward our vision of being multi-cultural. We've been trying for so long to take this step, but now we are finally taking a very big step.

Also, this past week, we spent some time with someone else who came out to interview with us to be our youth and young adult pastor. They are praying right now about whether God is calling them here – join us in praying that they will!



But even beyond that, did you know that we currently have five – FIVE – people – who have *local or district minister's licenses*. These are people *who are from our own church family* that are preparing to become pastors themselves! Listen: those things don't spring forth from fallow ground. Those things grow from the fertile soil of faith that you have been farming, so God is preparing us for ministry needs that we don't even know we have yet. Did you hear me? God springs forth these things from the fertile soil of faith that you have been farming.

One of the ways you do that year after year has been with Upward Soccer, and God has multiplied your faith to the point that for the last several years, our church has had the largest Upward Soccer program in existence. And from that faithfulness, we've seen families join us in this journey of faith. Here's another one. Watch this video from the Huibregtsees.

Isn't it great to hear these stories of farming faithfulness?

So let me share with you some of the ways that we are moving forward in faith now that we've wrapped up Here For Good.

Most of you remember that while we have a lot of areas that need updating, we've identified three key areas: the foyer restrooms, consolidating the children's areas, and then the Worship Center.

The membership voted just a few months ago to affirm this plan: we will renovate the foyer restrooms to make them nicer and ADA compliant, and we will consolidate the children's area for their safety and parents' convenience. We will do that as nicely and efficiently as possible in order to save as much as we can from what you've given to be able to renovate the Worship Center.

The Renovation Team has been working with the Church Board since October of 2021 to hire an architect (BPH), to explore priority areas, to submit plans to the board, and to hire a contractor (Moen). I'm happy to say that we have all of that, including plans, for the foyer restrooms and the

Don't get me wrong – we're not trying to get by on the cheap with these renovations; we don't want things to look shabby. This place needs to be attractive and bring honor to God. *But* we don't need a Taj Mahal; we need a tool in the hands of God. That is what your life is, and that is what this church is. We are HERE FOR GOOD! I want to share one last video testimony with you.

This is from Maxine Lydin. Maxine is one of the saints of our church. She represents many people who have served and sacrificed for the sake of this church for several decades. These folks have watched a lot of things come and go; programs, trends, worship styles, even pastors. But through it all they have remained faithful to God and to West Valley Church. And God has remained faithful to them, and to us – often because of them. So I want you to hear her testimony. But please understand that it is more than that. This is a wise word from a dear saint who loves God, loves you, and loves this church. This is like a church matriarch. This is why we are multi-generational.

Prayer

Benediction (Psalm 37:3-6)

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live in the land, and farm faithfulness.
Enjoy the Lord,
and he will give what your heart asks.
Commit your way to the Lord!
Trust him! He will act and will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,
your justice like high noon.