

2015 Annual Report

It is my privilege once again to bring before you the Providence Baptist Church annual elders report for 2015. At the completion of 2014 we laid before you three goals for the following year. Those three goals were 1) to develop and provide more leadership for the church in order to accomplish its ministry, 2) develop more healthy fellowship opportunities throughout the year, and 3) to continue with the strategy presented in 2013 and implemented in 2014 in order to work toward building the kingdom of God. I would like to address each of these goals in turn and then lay out our plans for the year 2016.

With our first goal to develop and provide for leadership in the church, the elders presented to you at the June business meeting our formal plan to implement a deacon ministry. This was followed by a town hall meeting in August where the congregation was invited to discuss the issue at length. Then the church voted to proceed with the plan at the September business meeting. The church was gracious enough to allow the elders to implement the plan as a pilot program before we tried to codify the process in our constitution and by-laws. Immediately after the vote, we sent out a letter to the congregation asking them to submit names in order to fulfil the three deacon functions of visitation, local community ministry and benevolence. I am pleased to report that the names of six different men were presented to the elders by the November 1st deadline. Since then, the elders have been both praying and working towards a process to vet the individual names. It is our hope to present the candidates for affirmation sometime after the first of the year. In addition to this, we also told you last year that we were still working through a list of possible candidates to serve as elders at the church. These candidates came from the list of nominations you presented to us in 2014. As we announced then, some of the men were unknown by the all of the elders and others needed to be tested in leadership positions as the scriptures indicate. The elders were led to select two more men to serve on the council. These gentlemen were presented the opportunity and one refused due to current obligations in his personal life. Of course, the one that accepted was Greg Barnett who was affirmed this evening to serve as an elder. We have great hopes for Greg as he is precisely the type of man we look forward to work alongside in order to shepherd the flock of God. On a different note, with a degree of sadness, we would like to acknowledge Wade Patterson's decision this past spring to step down as an elder. Wade has served as an elder faithfully at

Providence since its inception. We would like to express our thanks to Wade and Melissa for his service in to our congregation over these past 12 years. They want to assure you, that although they now serve in different roles, they are just as committed to Providence as they have been in the past. Already Wade has begun work on creating classes that can help people use their finances in a Biblical manner and he has made himself available to the pastors for regular advice and friendship. And Melissa is helping the elders with a facility usage policy. But to both of them, we want to say thank you for the many years of service as an elder.

In regards to our second goal to develop healthy fellowship opportunities throughout the year, we have made significant steps in this area. It must be remembered that true fellowship (in the Biblical sense) is not just fun activities but times of bonding and nurturing one another. Pay attention to that phrase ‘one another’. It is an important biblical phrase. To that end, we first began by addressing our K group ministry as a means of encouraging relationships. This started with K group facilitator training. This preparation has become both a teaching time and an open forum where our facilitators are able to share ideas and suggestions in improving the K group experience. Leaders, now, have the pastors preaching schedule so that they can prepare well ahead of time. They have also gained new ideas to create discussion as well as foster care and fellowship among their K groups members. Your feedback has been important in this process and we have been undergoing a renewal in the K group experience. Thank you for your faithful attendance on Wednesday nights and thank you facilitators for enriching the lives of our members. We cannot emphasize enough the need for you to be at K group so that we might care for one another.

In addition to K group, prayer is also a way to cultivate intimacy. Our elders recognize this and have taken the lead in implementing more prayer into the life of the church. Over the past year, each elder has been assigned families to call once a month and acquire the prayer needs of those homes. These requests are brought before us corporately on the first Tuesday of the month where your families are prayed over extensively. In addition to this, our second year of summer prayer meetings has also been a huge success. For those of you who were able to participate, you actually saw chairs being set up in the transept to accommodate the volume of people showing up. Providence has learned the value of *corporate prayer* **and** *individual vulnerability* as we share our requests with one another. It has created and intimacy among us that did not exist before in addition to seeing the Lord answer our requests. This is a time I would

encourage you to participate in one again as we both pray and study Psalm 113 and Psalm 126 as our Psalms of the year.

Last year, I mentioned to you that true fellowship is fostered when we are in *service to one another*. To that end we resurrected Vacation Bible School at Providence. Under the leadership of Pam Giles and Kim Lott, our church was able to minister to over 70 people. These two ladies created a fun and easy environment that made the work both rewarding and enjoyable. It was such a success that I have had parents asking when we will host again and volunteers already signing up to help. Last year we formed the History Ministry team under the leadership of Ann Vaughn. She and her group have been collecting data about Providence and the work of its members that will help provide for a sense of foundation and identity for the future. In addition to these activities, we have been able to have rewarding times of *bonding with one another* such as the church wide picnic, ice cream social and parking lot light dedication service, our Chile cook-off, our Missions Celebration Banquet, and our men meeting regularly for prayer breakfasts. So in this portion of the report you have heard the phrases– nurturing one another, caring for one another, praying for one another, service to one another and bonding with one another. So our fellowship and concern for one another is improving at Providence.

Our third goal was to continue to be faithful to the strategy we initiated in 2013 in both our adult Sunday School Program and Missions endeavours. In terms of the former, we laid out a plan with our Sunday School program that transform people from becoming mere disciples to becoming disciple makers. To accomplish this we needed a graduating system of classes that educate not only those fresh to the faith and but also encourage deeper study and ministry for those maturing in in their walk with Christ. So we numbered our Sunday School courses and offered a rotation that provided for multiple options during the Sunday School hour. Instead of just having Sunday School for Sunday School's sake, we were now teaching for transformation and headed in a particular direction. This year we have completed the full rotation of the 100 Level Sunday School courses. Some of those classes will be on their second rotation in 2016. In addition to these we have offered more 200 level courses that have enriched the theology of our members. And I am pleased to announce we offered our first 300 level course in 2015 (Our Discipleship Class) which has had 40 people in regular attendance. The members of this class have now seen the value of what they have been learning in the previous two years and are now seeking how they can use their knowledge to disciple one-on-one brothers and sisters in Christ. If

just half of these members take advantage of what they have learned, then we will see 20 new maturing members through their efforts. (I am hoping for the full 40). And next year, we will be offering two 400 level classes on Biblical Counselling where the students will be actively involved in ministry of the church. Under Mike Watson's leadership we have enlisted a full stable of teachers and it is our desire to provide new resources and training for our teachers in the upcoming year to improve the value in our Adult Sunday School program. You can already see that the entire 2016 course schedule along with teachers has been planned out for the whole year. So we can say we are reaping the first fruits of Sunday School at Providence.

In the area of missions, Providence is working towards building the Kingdom of God better than it ever has. Your missions team has performed superbly. Let me give you an update under three headings, our short term missionaries and church planting efforts, our work with unengaged people groups and your giving to missions. First of all Providence has sent and both financially and prayerfully supported short term mission projects both domestically and abroad. We continued our support of Heather Gargis as an intern of the Reformed University Fellowship at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg Virginia. We have sent out Locker McDonald doing two years of church planting with Campus Crusade among the Nousu People group in southern China. We continue to support Tim Knoespel in Mongolia through the English Language Institute. We sent Monika Carroll to Ecuador with Church Planters International. And our church sent a team of 16 students and leaders to work in the nation of Haiti. In addition to this work, our students along with another youth group in Michigan raised over \$6,600 to build a house for a homeless family in that country. We have continued our support of Church planters in the U.S. Through our general fund we support Robert and Lindsey Smith as they continue to work with International Students at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. And we also support Scott and Julie Terry working at Christ Fellowship in Portland Maine. This year, the mission team of providence voted to include Craig and Elizabeth Priestly who are planting a church in the Humboldt Park area of Chicago, IL. [This part of the report has been removed for security concerns. Please see the pastor for a hard copy]. But your giving to the missions endeavour did not stop at these activities. The Lord has done some extraordinary things through your generosity. For example, you gave \$700 to assist the South Carolina Baptist Convention's disaster relief when that state's capitol was devastated by floods in October. We made you aware of a need to purchase Bibles in a foreign language – a need of just over \$200.00 and on a single Sunday you gave over \$1,500.

Out of benevolence you helped pay for professional Biblical counselling for a pastors wife facing a difficult challenge in ministry in another state. You paid \$2,000 for the vaccinations of a new missionary family who are going on the field in India to work with an unreached people group. You gave a sizable gift to the Kemp family in South Africa to enable them to purchase reliable and safe transportation for their growing family. And just recently you gave \$2,000 to help pay for the moving expenses of the Moorhead family as Jonathan makes his way to the Czech Republic to teach at a seminary. You have been most generous Providence and by doing so you are changing the world around you. Overall since December of 2014 to November 2015 you have given **\$80,536.13** to building the kingdom of God (this was in contrast to the \$54,705.44 you gave in 2014).. If you have not done so, I want to encourage you to sign up for the mission's banquet to receive the full report from our individual missionaries. Providence Baptist Church had a direct influence on nine countries, six states, and 14 cities across the globe.

Providence has had a host of other blessings that the Lord presented us in 2015. It is exciting to see God use you in the participation of these blessings. For example, Beth Hammond and Jana Roy were kind enough to organize our shoe box ministry. We collected 82 shoe boxes that will be distributed though out the world this Christmas. This is more than double the amount collected last year. Eleanor Moss organized the food drive for the downtown rescue mission. In two weeks the church gathered a 55 gal drum full of food. Amanda Adams organized a Jesse Tree ornament exchange recently. We had 20 families participate in this activity. And while the ornaments are just now being placed on the tree, we have already been told that the exchange itself was a time of blessing and fellowship. This past year, our church was blessed to add numerous families to our membership. In no particular order, we received the Smith Family, the Crooks Family, The Kobliskas, the Roberts, the Carters, and The Stewarts. And I am pleased to announce that Stan, Melissa, Luke and Manie McDonald have joined the church. At this time we have four additional families in the pipeline applying for membership. We also had a major capital improvement to the church grounds with the addition of our parking lot lights. You raised \$12,500 in addition to the general fund to purchase the lights. The benefit of the lights became very apparent during the seasonal time change. I am sure as you arrived and later when you exit this evening you will once again give thanks for what the Lord has done as you move to your cars. It is good and right that we thank God for all these many blessings that we have received at Providence.

It is at this time that I would like to outline the elder's vision for 2016. Of course goal number 1 is to remain faithful to what God has already tasked us to do. We need to better support the vision God has put before Providence. I want to make sure that I specify the word 'better'. Better does not necessarily mean bigger. But we can be better at supporting what is already in place. In Matthew 25:21 (ESV) Jesus commended the servant by saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.' Therefore, we need to continue to pray and support our missionary vision at Providence- particularly our involvement with our unengaged people groups. Please make sure you come to the Missions Celebration so you can hear how we can better support our missionaries through prayer. We also need to continue to pray and support our discipleship process at Providence. And we need to pray and support our new deacon ministries when they come on-line in the New Year. I would ask you to begin praying for our soon to be affirmed deacons and I would challenge you to ask of yourselves, 'what can I do specifically that would make their job serving us a joy?' There is nothing more deflating than for each of these men to lay out a plan before you for involvement in community ministry or visitation and no one show up to participate. In addition to this, I would ask you see K group more as an avenue of love and less as another meeting to attend. I know that it can be inconvenient to get out on a week night. But you really need to see yourself as serving the body through this ministry. You should tell yourself, this is not about me. It is about the one I love. So remaining faithful to the task at hand is key to our success in the future.

In addition to implementing the deacon ministry this upcoming year, the elders also will be looking at a Biblical response to particular social concerns effecting the church such as the topics of transgender issues and gambling. We also want to address three particular opportunities of ministry within our church. The first of these being how we can better minister and serve the women of our church. It has become a concern to us that we need to figure out how we can create occasions for women to engage one another. We have to tread carefully here because as you may have noticed, none of the elders are women. So ladies we really want your input as to how we can best serve you. Second, we also have noticed that many in our congregation are dealing with issues regarding aging. We want to find ways that we can support not only those who are aging and but also those who have parents that struggle with health issues. And third we want to take an honest evaluation of our ministry to children, particularly how we can assist parents in raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And finally, we need to upgrade and re-envision how we can better support the 50/50 plan. Our portables, while they have held together, are deteriorating. The concern is such that we need to look at how we can work towards replacing them with a permanent structure as soon as possible. And while the bank considers us a good investment, as pastor, I refuse to plunge us into more debt. I believe we corporately have the resources to forge ahead to get our education space where it needs to be. So with that in mind, you will see the 50/50 plan put before you regularly. I want to assure you that we are not trying to guilt you into giving more. But we also recognize that unless the need is constantly before us, we will continue to put off the needed sacrifice until it's too late. There is a difference to reacting when the check engine light is on and to when transmission in your car actually drops. Consider the check engine light on with the new Sunday School building.

So very briefly let me recap with what we are looking at in 2016, remaining faithful to our current ministry strategy. Assisting our deacons with their ministries, evaluating the opportunities to better serve our ladies, those experiencing issues related to aging, and our children. And to energize our 50/50 plan. We ask that you pray for your elders as we seek to honor God by being faithful in our service to him.