



CHRIST FIRST

COVINA

April 17, 2018

Dear Christ First Family,

If you didn't receive my letter last week, you might be confused at this one. If you have not received last week's letter, please call the church office at 626-339-7378, and we will mail it to you asap. Please read this letter, and be sure to read Pre-Campaign Letter #1 as well.

Why we are doing this Daring Faith Campaign?

1. To Grow Spiritually by Stretching our Bold Faith

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2–4

We want to pray that we grow in this faith challenge and continue to speak God's Word with **boldness** while God does this miracle of transforming our campus and seeing Vision 2022 come to fruition.

*“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all **boldness**, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with **boldness**.”
Acts 4:29–31*

2. To Better Prepare for and Anticipate the People God will Send

*“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.”
Acts 4:32*

Why would God send us people if we were not prepared for them? As a faith family we need to be like the early church and be “of one heart and soul” as we honor Christ together. Maybe God sees a group of His children who have the means to do something significant with their church campus, but they don't have the heart and depth of faith willing to come together sacrificially to reach the community for Christ. A vibrant, healthy and daring faith in God corporately *precedes* multitudes of lives transformed.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13

Our bold act of unity around a faith campaign of transforming our campus will get the community looking at our boldness, and our one prayer is that they will recognize that we have been with Jesus. So yes, we're going to build and renovate some buildings on our campus but, we build buildings to build our faith and share our faith with our community. My prayer is that the sacrifice Jesus leads us all to make as we give over the next three years is a spark that reignites a vibrancy of faith in all areas of your life.

3. To Enhance our Relational Unity by Working Together

*"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be **united** in the same mind and the same judgment." 1 Corinthians 1:10*

We're going to grow deeper relationally with each other. It's going to be a challenge to go through this process, but it's the people who have been through life's biggest challenges together who have the deepest friendships. Husbands and wives are so united going through the labor and delivery of a child. Sports teams are relationally strong, not simply because they won the championship game but because of the gut wrenching struggle to get there. We won't have a perfect relationship, we won't always get along and agree with details across the board, but we're a family and we're going to grow closer in our friendship together because of the gut wrenching struggle to do something by faith for our great God!

4. To Be Wise Stewards of God's Resources

"And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" Matthew 25:20–21

Christ First, I believe God has given us the vision and the provision to use our campus to send the message to our guests that we care! Most of us say we care with the quality of our personal homes and yet our church campus today is tired, confusing to navigate, and needs attention. Let's come together and be wise stewards with what we have been blessed with, honoring the Lord with how we steward the gift of 200 N 2nd Ave.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19–21

Using your wealth sacrificially to allow our church community to build more and better relational bridges that can withstand the weight of truth we're called to share is being a wise steward of God's resources. This is a tangible way to store up treasures in heaven as we create an updated ministry environment for future families to encounter the risen Christ.

"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Luke 16:9

Jesus could not be more clear in this verse. His call is for us to use our wealth to build friendships. And those new friends will experience the light of Christ in you and me. Many will come to Christ and that means they will enjoy the incredible place that Christ has prepared for

them in heaven for eternity (John 14:1-3). No doubt, as you cross the threshold into that friend's place prepared by Jesus, you will have ZERO regrets with regards to the sacrifice you made in giving to the Daring Faith campaign. It's all about pursuing one more for Christ.

5. To Stand on the Shoulders of Spiritual Giants

The Bible often commands us to honor people who are true heroes, those who sacrifice for the benefit of others. We're going to do that every week. Paul gives us an example of this in Ph 2:25-30 where he honors Epaphroditus. Each Sunday from April 29th to May 20th, we want to honor a Christ First Covina hero of the past, one who took a courageous step to be a blessing to thousands of people over the last 65 years.

Plus we'd like to introduce you to some of our living Christ First heroes, those who were around or who had family around during the time in our church's past where we built buildings to better build lives up in Christ. Courageous faith to build is part of the Christ First DNA!

What we will not do and what we will do during this 3 year campaign:

1. We WON'T force/guilt.

We will not force or guilt anyone to give. We're actually opposed to this. Why? Because the Bible says never give under compulsion (2 Cor 9:7). And in fact, if somebody ever comes to you and pressures you for a donation and they heap on the guilt and you feel forced to give by it, just say, "Pastor James told me not to give". Yes, I am telling you to not give. In fact I am telling you this: If you ever feel forced by *me* don't give. My hope and prayer is to boldly inspire you but never make you feel forced to give. Why? God's Word says to never give because you were forced to give. Never give out of guilt. You give out of joy.

Let me just make it real clear. I don't want anybody to feel like I or any other leader snuck up on you with this campaign. On May 20th we're going to have a big party with one combined service (Yes it's going to be an unforgettable celebration!) so we can make a big initial offering and a commitment where people sign pledges. Some people may say, "I really don't want to do that." Here's what I say to you... don't. I'm letting you off the hook. But, if God leads you to give and be part of what I, the elders, the staff and many of our volunteer leaders believe He's leading us to do, then honor Him with your joy and your sacrifice.

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians 9:7

You know what that word "cheerful" means in the original Greek? It's the word "*hilaros*". Guess what word we get from that?! Hilarious! So when you bring an offering you ought to bring it full of joy, cheer and hilariously! So we're not going to force anybody to give.

Second thing we will not do...

2. We WON'T sell anything!

There often can be a difference between fundraisers and generosity. We won't do fundraisers for this campaign. We won't have cake sales, we won't have bake walks, we won't have car washes, we won't sell candies or cookies. We won't do silent auctions. We just won't do them.

The difference between giving and fundraising: in fundraising, I give you a reward for money you give to my project. In giving, I give myself out of my own generosity. Fundraising doesn't build your character. Giving does. Generosity does.

So we're not going to sell anything. David says in 2 Samuel 24:24, talking about the offering for the temple in Jerusalem, *"I will not sacrifice an offering that costs me nothing."* So we won't be selling anything during this campaign.

What we will do without apology are the next three things:

1. We will show how everyone can give something.

Everybody can give something, even if it's just a penny. Jesus tells the story about the widow who gave two mites. He said, *"That woman who gave two pennies gave more than the rich people who gave before her because she gave all that she had."* (Luke 21:1-4) Even if you're out of work you can give something. You can make a pledge of faith that during the next three years "I'd like to give this amount." Even if you don't have any money right now, you can pledge something of what you will have in the future. That's called faith.

2. We will ask people to sacrifice.

Second, we will ask people to sacrifice. I make no apology in saying to you I want you to learn to sacrifice for the greatest cause in the world – the kingdom of God. There is no greater cause. We sacrifice for ourselves all the time. Some people might say, "I don't believe in making a thirty-six month giving commitment. That's financial. That's being presumptuous on the future."

Have you ever bought a car? Have you ever made a commitment? Have you ever rented a house? Have you ever bought a mortgage? You don't mind making financial commitments as long as it's on your behalf. You just don't want to make one to God? So I'll ask people to sacrifice because God's Word is clear about the need for God's people to be sacrificial and generous in their giving and how that level of giving can transform hearts.

3. We will follow the biblical pattern for an offering in 1 Chron 29.

David lays this out in 1 Chronicles 29 in the offering to build the temple in Jerusalem. We will learn, be inspired by and follow that example. We will ask our leaders to give first (1 Chron 29:6). We will rejoice as we give willingly (1 Chron 29:9). We will acknowledge our strength to earn money and all we do earn comes from God and not from us (1 Chron 29:12). You can expect to see some miracles (1 Chron 29:25) because when people trust God, when people take risks, when people dream great dreams, when people go for it in united faith, prayer and actions God moves.

4. We will expect you to grow spiritually.

As I said you're probably going to grow more in the next four to six weeks, than you will in all the rest of the year. Why? Because we're going to be focusing on your spiritual growth. You will learn more soon and we invite you to dive deep!

I hate to tell you this next part but it's part of the deal... you can expect...

5. Expect to be hassled by Satan.

You're going to have some difficulties in the next 4-6 weeks. Satan is going to try to distract you to keep you from growing. Do you think Satan wants you to learn to live by faith? No. Do you think he wants you to learn how to be generous? No. Do you think he wants you to learn how to go in ways and places that you've never gone before with your life? Absolutely not. I can tell you, my family has personally been hassled more lately and so has our staff. It hasn't been easy.

I believe our church has been hassled too. Our giving percentage has been a healthy 110% for the past couple years. We have been prayerfully planning and preparing for this campaign for that past eighteen months. And then January 2018 comes along, only a few months prior to kicking off this campaign; our giving takes a dive, even going as low as 82%.

So I lose a few nights of sleep wondering (read: stress!) if it's smart to be starting a campaign since our giving has dipped. With a lot of prayer and consultation with the elders, the decision was made to move forward. We will trust God for the big picture and the vision He gave to us the year prior. I'm so glad we did. As I write this letter (April 11) our giving has increased to a healthy 96%. Praise the Lord! God is on the throne and He'll see this vision through!

So Satan is going to throw everything at you too. You may have unexpected illnesses and your car may break down. And some of you may get fired during this time. Some of you may go through a real crisis of grief and lose a loved one. Some of you may have a fight with your husband or wife or child. That's a high probability. Conflict is Satan's favorite way to get you distracted. Just today someone broke into our car and stole Shanna's purse. A distraction God will see us through.

Satan is going to try to distract you and get you off task and get you to forget this Daring Faith journey. Just remember, he has one main tool in his bag, which is to sell you a bunch of lies. Those close to you are NOT your enemies and you WILL get through any level of unexpected life challenge.

"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." 1 John 4:4

Don't miss one Sunday of the upcoming Daring Faith series beginning **April 29th**. Each of the four weeks I will show you designs of what our campus could be. I think you'll be excited, and I know your 8 to 15 will too!

In Christ for whom we pursue one more,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Laing', with a stylized, cursive script.

James Laing
Lead Pastor