

Sweet 16 Anniversary Update – Ps 100

Becky and I were at Radiant Bible Church near Indianapolis last weekend, where I spoke at a Men’s Conference on Saturday and preached on Sunday. Another Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church like ours. Which was encouraging for *me*, and I hope is encouraging for you. But it’s good to be back.

➤ Before we get going, this is **Membership** Weekend, and I want to recognize 2 people who are joining our church: *Joyce Hesse* (Hess) and *Drew Stout*. Each of them expressing their commitment to God’s work of ministry and God’s people, right here at Coram Deo.

And doing so publicly. Because that’s what membership is. A public expression of a personal commitment. A commitment to *belong* together in mutual partnership, *work* together for mutual goals, and *stick* together in mutual love.

Not only that, but it also reflects a willingness and desire to place yourself under the guidance and care of those who *lead* our church. Those entrusted with *keeping watch over your souls*.

So on behalf of the elders and *all* who are members, I want to welcome Joyce and Drew to membership at Coram Deo Bible Church. We look forward to many years of faithful, fruitful partnership together.

➤ That said, we’re celebrating the 16th anniversary of our church this weekend! Sweet 16. And to do so, I’m going to give you an update. A way to recount and give thanks for some of the things God is doing. So turn with me to Ps 100 and let’s get started.

A Psalm for giving thanks.

[1] Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! [2] Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

[3] Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

[4] Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

[5] For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (ESV)

God is good. And his faithfulness in the midst of a difficult year *has* endured. So I’m going to highlight some of that, some of the *ways* of his faithfulness, and hopefully add fuel to our joyful noise at the end.

The first is God’s faithfulness to move and *work* this year.

• 2020

Sitting in a wedding reception Saturday evening March 14th with some of our staff, we heard about the President’s order to shut down. Remember that? It’s one of those, “Where were you when?” moments. So in the car on the way home we got on the phone, put our heads together, and cancelled services. And started worshipping from home. At least *you* did. I preached to a camera for 11 weeks! Which led to this iconic **photo** on Easter.

And yet, God was at work. Defying the odds and using it. Extending his love and faithfulness.

➤ Listen to this email I received on April 21st; about a month later. I had mentioned that I hoped she and her husband were able to watch *online*, and she said:

Absolutely have been watching online! Wouldn’t miss it! I share the stream live, and want you to know that [an atheist in our extended family] tuned in this past Sunday! I was shocked! Obviously, God is on the move! Despite the circumstances!

And then, on September 11th, 5 months later, she wrote this:

You mentioned 2 weeks ago from the pulpit how God is working online, so I wanted to share with you that we’ve officially hit the 200 mark. As of last Sunday, 200 people have joined us for worship services online, since May! We know a number of them are believers, and a number of them are not. I started keeping track so I could pray for each one. Despite the current circumstances in our world, the Good News of God’s Word continues to go forth! What an encouragement!!! What a joy!!!

Even with the building empty, God was faithful to move & work this year. And continues.

Second, is God’s faithfulness through our . . .

• Giving

As you can see on your notes, we’re *behind* in our regular giving, about 8%, but not so much that we can’t function. (**Y-T-D Giving vs Y-T-D Need**) It’s a little more than normal, but not insurmountable.

Nor have we *spent* more than what has come in. We were able to cut some expenses and defer others, enabling us to keep an even keel. We can’t do that *long-term*, but for now, we’re okay; we’re not in crisis mode. Which is further evidence of God’s faithfulness to provide. Great faithfulness.

3rd, and even more extraordinary, is God’s faithfulness to *bless* this year, through our . . .

• Capital Campaign

It’s one thing to sustain us, it’s another to bless us.

We had been thinking and praying about renovating the south end of our building for years. Our Children’s Ministry was doing the best they could, but they needed better space and better facilities.

So we put things in motion last *Fall* with our **One To The Next** capital campaign. From one generation to the next, *so that they should set their hope in God*. Ps 78:7.

Then Covid hit. And we were left with a decision. Move ahead with a 3.9M goal in the midst of a pandemic, or push pause for who knows *how* long. And pay *more* down the road. It tested our faith, it tested our resolve, and it tested our judgment.

But the reasons remained. Children’s ministry is the greatest outreach arm of our church, most people come to Christ as a child, and our kids deserve the best we can provide. So we made the decision to move ahead on March 29th, smack dab in the middle of the shutdown. Remember?

And God has been faithful to bless. Through you. Your generosity and participation. It’s crazy. And a God-story that should be told for years to come.

➤ But we still have a need. (**Need vs Pledged**) About \$800k. Not that we can't finish, but that we're hoping and praying that many of you who *haven't* yet pledged or given, will do so. So far, 307 households have participated. And we're hoping for 350.

So if that's you, will you consider it? In addition to your regular tithe to the General Fund, will you consider a gift or pledge to our Building Fund? I've said from the beginning, "If we're willing to give, God's faithful to provide." Even bless.

Which leads us to the buildout itself.

- **Buildout**

Talk about faithfulness. Construction is on schedule and moving quickly. No small thing in a project this size. And it's largely the result of some great *staff* oversight, and our general contractor: Bush Construction. They've done a phenomenal job, and have been super to work with.

In fact, I wish I could show you their handiwork in person. But here are a few pictures:

This is the *front entry*. With shapes, colors, and curves I'd *never* think of.

Next is the *same area* looking to the right; the place where the jungle gym will go.

Next is *one of the 3 large meeting rooms*; with acoustical clouds.

Last is one of *rotundas near the back*. And the **same** with some carpeting down.

Quite a blessing. And pretty exciting.

And if all goes as planned, January 10th is the Dedication and Open House. 7 weeks. And January 17th is the Grand Opening; the first Sunday we will use it for Children's Ministry.

Needless to say, God is good. And to whom much is given, much is expected.

Next, is the . . .

- **Great Commission Collective**

Another way God has demonstrated his faithfulness. This time through our partnerships.

The GCC is a network of churches that exists to *plant* churches and strengthen *leaders*. (**Logo**) We've been a part of it since its inception, and give 4% of our budget toward its work. I serve as Chairman of the Board right now, and thank God for the opportunity to partner with other likeminded churches, to do more together than we ever could alone.

One example of which, is **Adam Bailey**; our most recent church planter. After sending them out last Fall, Adam and his Core Team just launched; (**Photo**) 2 weeks ago; in the West Des Moines area. It's a *dual* partnership with another partner of ours: the Baptist Convention of Iowa.

➤ But most of our time and money for church planting goes to the GCC. And here's a short **video** to give you an overview.

God's faithfulness endures.

6th, is his faithfulness to *use* us, through . . .

- **Local Outreach**

Often times with various **ministries** we support and partner with. Like the Food Pantry, Pregnancy Resources, 180, Lives of Legacy, YouthHope, and World Relief.

Other times, our outreach is direct. From those in our church to those in need. Check out these *testimonies* in that respect. (**Video**)

God has been faithful to use us.

7th, God has been faithful to *extend* our reach in . . .

- **Missions**

In addition to our church planting efforts through the GCC, we also support global partners in cross-*cultural* settings. To plant churches in low-reached or unreached people groups.

And several years ago we established a 10 in 10 Initiative, to raise up and send out 10 of our *own* missionaries, in 10 years. And while that's been slow to materialize, our first couple, **Josh and Ally**, have been on the field now for 13 months. Praise God.

In addition to that, we're super excited about two more couples who are in process; and maybe a third. One of whom is **Ben and Christina**.

Just like Josh and Ally, they're headed to Radius International next year; a language and culture acquisition school in Mexico. So we've opened the **Radius Fund** once again, to *help* them with that phase. And they're going to begin raising support in *general* after the turn of the year.

That's God's faithfulness to extend our reach in missions. And if you think God is calling *you*, get in touch with Danny Phillips, our Outreach Pastor. He'd love to talk with you and begin walking you through a process to *confirm* your calling, and guide you in the next steps.

Next, is God's faithfulness to *change* us through . . .

- **Baptism**

13 people last time. Each and every one expressing their love and devotion to Christ, both verbally and visually. Take a look. (**Video**)

God's faithfulness to change us, endures.

And last, but definitely not least, is God's faithfulness to *expand* our ministry, with a school. We're starting a school.

- **Coram Deo Academy**

It's something I never *thought* we'd do, or *could* do, but it's happening. It's not your typical school, but the best of an online education, in a private Christian academy.

That means:

The students work at their own pace, with online instruction and grading.

They have their own online teacher for every class.

They receive in-person help in real-time, from adult facilitators.

They meet in a classroom with other students, right here at the church.

And it's fully accredited, K-12.

To do it, we've partnered with Liberty University. We are an official affiliate of Liberty

University Online Academy. Which means all the instruction comes from a biblical worldview and a high standard of excellence.

And that's important. **(Logo)** Because *our vision is to provide a comprehensive, personalized, biblically-integrated education*. In other words, we don't just see this as a school, but a means to influence and disciple the next generation; as part of our church, our ministry.

That's why we chose "*Instilling faith. Inspiring excellence.*" as our tagline. It's an effort to help parents disciple their kids, and help kids rise to the occasion.

➤ Now, I say we're *starting* it, but we've actually already begun; this Fall. On a pilot basis with a small cohort. Here's a few pictures.

This one on their computers; looking all studious.

And **this one** doing a science experiment. Obviously a fun one.

There are 12 fulltime students, Kindergarten through 10th grade. They gather 4 days a week, 9-3. And it's going great. The kids love it, and they're learning. Quickly.

And if you're wondering who runs it all, it's superwoman. **Alissa Adkins**. She's the fulltime school administrator, and does a phenomenal job. She also has several volunteers who help her with everything from in-house tutoring to P.E. So needless to say, we're pretty excited.

➤ And the decision came down to 4 things: opportunity, need, facilities, & people. **(Logo)**

With the Covid restrictions and difficulties in public schools these days, we saw it as an *opportunity*. To help parents find the right situation for their kids.

Second, with all the unbiblical ideologies and worldviews being taught these days, we see a *need*. A need to teach what's *true*, and teach it from a *biblical* worldview.

Third, we have the *facilities*. At least we will in 7 weeks. Incredible facilities. *Perfect* for a school. Even though it wasn't in mind. At least *our* mind.

And last, we have the *people*. On staff. From an Executive Pastor who has a *doctorate* in education; to a Director of Children's Ministry with a *Masters*; to an Administrator who's a nurse and grew *up* with this kind of education; and has been involved in ministry to kids and students for 20 years.

So while we weren't planning on it, it really became a no-brainer. And the cost is about *half* the tuition of a *traditional* private school. **(Website)**

If that piques your interest, you can find more information on our website; including *Alissa's* contact information. Or you can call the church office directly.

Either way, thank the Lord and pray. We have a school! Evidence of God's faithfulness to expand our ministry and reach the next generation in ways we never imagined.

All because *the LORD is good*; [and because] *his steadfast love endures forever*; and his

faithfulness to all generations. Including ours, and the next.

Prayer – Lord, you *are* good. To *us*; as a church. And your love *does* endure. Despite our doubts and failures, your *faithfulness* hasn't wavered. Thank you. Thank you for choosing us, using us, stretching us, and blessing us. Do more, we pray. More for your glory and our joy. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD . . . Come into his presence with singing! [4] Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! (Ps 100:1-4) What do you say we get at it?