



2024

# State of the Church Address



**Emmaus Baptist Church — State of the Church Address**  
**Sunday, December 1, 2024**

**1. The Importance of Knowing Your Birthday**

My family is currently in the middle of a multi-week span of significant birthdays (18, 16, 13)! Every kid (and adult) knows – it’s important to know your birthday. Apparently, the same thing applies to pastors and churches. Multiple times in last year’s State of the Church Address – even to the point of asking people to put the date in their phone – I said Emmaus would turn 40 years old on December 6, 2026.

Here’s a screenshot of the Emmaus Constitution:

**1.3 HISTORY**

Emmaus Baptist Mission began June 5, 1983. The original Church Constitution was adopted on November 19, 1986. The Church’s Charter Day was December 7, 1986.

Oops...it turns out we’ve always used “December 7” as our birthday. So, December 6th was a swing-and-a-miss in last year’s address, but at least I had the year correct! Plus, a December 7th birthday is even better, because this date falls on a Sunday for the 50th year of Emmaus in 2036. 😊

Why does our date of birth matter? Currently, we’re in the middle of the first of four, 3-year frames. This first frame will lead to the 40th celebration, then the next three frames will take us toward our 50th birthday. As a reminder, here’s that overview:

**2024 - 2026 : Frame #1 = “Strengthen”**

**2026 – \*40th Anniversary of Emmaus is Monday, Dec 7, 2026 [to be celebrated on Dec 6th]**

**2027 - 2029 : Frame #2 = “Transition”**

**2030 – \*Celebrate 2000 Years of Christ’s Public Ministry**

**2030 - 2032 : Frame #3 = “Live like Jesus”**

**2033 – \*Celebrate 2000 Years of the Resurrection and the Church**

**2033 - 2035 : Frame #4 = “Be the Church”**

**2036 – \*50th Anniversary of Emmaus is Sunday, Dec 7, 2036**

During my time at Emmaus, I've presented a State of the Church Address each year on the first Sunday in December.<sup>1</sup> These addresses have looked back to celebrate how God has worked in our church family and looked forward to what might be next. For the first seven years, this address was presented during the year-end Business Meeting on Sunday night. Starting last year, the Emmaus staff encouraged me to move a portion of the address to Sunday morning. Today – a few weeks into my 9th year at Emmaus – we're going to continue the strategy of presenting a portion of the address in the morning and the rest tonight.

## **2. Begin with the End in Mind**

The opening illustration and guiding phrase for this year's address is, "Begin with the end in mind." This is the second of seven habits in Stephen Covey's bestselling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Beginning with the end in mind means to begin each day or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination, and then work toward making things happen to move in that direction. If we know our future goals and purposes, it changes how we operate in the present.

This approach provides good advice, but it can lead to overconfidence in our own plans. If you aim at the wrong goal from the beginning, what good are the steps that led to that goal? An obvious danger for churches is thinking that we get to determine the end – the goals – apart from God's Word and Spirit. Planning isn't prideful; but plans can definitely lead to pride. God has already laid out the end from the beginning. He is the One who provides the strength and wisdom for the journey. As we look ahead, we do so with complete humility, saying, "If the Lord wills." (James 4:13-17) Said another way, "We make our plans, but God directs our steps." (Proverbs 16:9)

Even with these cautions in mind, I think Covey's approach can be helpful.

- Where is your life heading? What are your goals? Your purpose for work and relationships?
- What is God calling us to do as a church? What are we actually working towards?

Even without exact clarity for the future, God still provides guidance for His people, and He provides the wisdom to live each day when we can't see clearly.

## **3. Before the Beginning**

*Sometimes, in order to know how to move forward, it's good to look back.* (We'll take this to an extreme degree in next Sunday morning's sermon when we look back before the beginning – before anything existed. What was happening *before* God created the world?)

In our long-range planning process, we've used a popular four-quadrant approach: People, Personnel, Programs, and Property (I first learned this from Doug Melton, pastor at Southern Hills). Because of the alliteration, you can imagine I swallowed this approach hook, line, sinker. I've found the approach useful not only for long-range planning but also for reviewing how God has been at work in our church family. During this morning's service, I want to mention a few things about People and Programs. Then, tonight at 5pm, we'll focus on Personnel and Property.

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<sup>1</sup> These addresses are available online at [www.emmausokc.org/state-of-the-church](http://www.emmausokc.org/state-of-the-church).

### 3.1 People - Whom are we reaching? Individuals and Groups (Numbers and Stories)

#### 1. Baptisms

- a. So far this year, we've had **42 baptisms!!** This number includes 12 teenagers baptized on a single Sunday in early August, plus baptisms throughout the year of both kids and adults. And, more baptisms to come before the end of the calendar year.
- b. Early in 2025, we're going to have a sermon focused specifically on baptism. If you've never been baptized – or have questions about baptism (maybe even a baptism experience earlier in your life) – please reach out to someone or contact me directly (owen@emmausokc.org; 580-658-0652). I'd love to talk with you about this step of faith.

#### 2. Attendance

- a. Total attendance on **Sunday mornings is averaging 615 total** (550 in the worship center room; 65 in the preschool and children's church areas), up 25 from last year and up 85 from 2022.
- b. **Sunday school attendance is averaging 431**, up 16 from last year. This doesn't include increased attendance in our informal small groups that meet throughout the week.

#### 3. New Church Members

- a. This year, we have **52 new members** at Emmaus.
- b. \*How does someone become a member?
  - i. ***On the 2nd Sunday of each month, we offer a New Member Info Meeting in the main lobby.***
    1. This is a chance to talk through expectations for membership and to help guests get a better understanding of our church.
    2. Following this class, we meet with prospective members to hear their testimony, then new members are presented to the church at various points during the year.
- c. \*What about Discover Emmaus?
  - i. ***On the 1st Sunday of each month, we offer Discover Emmaus in the main lobby.***
    1. This meeting isn't required for membership, but it's a good first step for guests wanting to ask questions and know more about the church.
    2. Prior to 2024, Discover Emmaus was a lunch offered a few times per year. This year, we switched to the consistent pattern of a brunch (aka - whatever snacks Owen remembers to buy at Wal-Mart) during Sunday School. The overall numbers for Discover Emmaus have been down slightly, but the smaller groups have led to more conversation and a much higher rate of people ultimately connecting with the church through membership.
    3. At some point in 2025, we might consider offering a special lunch option for Discover Emmaus, but for now, the 9:15am Sunday morning option will remain consistent on the first Sunday of each month.

- d. Know a guest who wants to take a “**first step**”?
  - i. That’s the **First Sunday** of each month (Jan 5; Feb 2; and so on), in the main lobby, during Sunday School, for the **Discover Emmaus Brunch**.
- e. Know someone who wants to move toward **membership**?
  - i. That’s the **Second Sunday** of each month (Dec 8; Jan 12; Feb 9 ...), in the main lobby, during Sunday School, for the **New Member Info Meeting**.

#### 4. Seasons of Life

- a. In September, we spent three weeks looking broadly at God’s work in different seasons of life: **0 - 20; 20 - 50; 50+** (these years are based on general ages in the Bible, especially the Old Testament and the life of Jesus).
- b. I love the generational diversity at Emmaus. We often joke about being an “average” church, and I recently ran a report showing **the median age of our members is 49**. 😊
- c. Membership doesn’t include most of our kids and teenagers, so I also ran a report for the age of anyone who attended a group in 2024. A lot of you don’t have your age listed in our database (!!), but either way, the **median age for our group attendance is 26!** (The median age was 33.8 for Moore, OK, from 2022 data.)
- d. A quick glance around the room on Sunday morning shows a wide range of ages, including our faithful crew of older adults, an exciting number of young adults and families, a ton of teenagers, a stampede of kids headed towards Elevate Children’s Church ... and we have several more babies on the way!

*\*\*\*Please, please, please, sign up to help with Preschool Extended Session during the 10:45am Worship Service, if you haven’t already done so.*

An obvious danger with listing numbers in the State of the Church Address is that numbers might become the overriding focus or goal. However, the old adage is true: numbers represent people – people who are created by God, loved by God, people for whom Jesus died, and people who need to grow as disciples of Jesus. We count baptisms, membership, and attendance not because these are the most important things, but to help us assess and consider new ways to reach the people God has placed around us. These numbers aren’t the end of the story. The focus is ultimately about people believing in Jesus and experiencing the life that only He can give.

Dallas Willard famously said, “*Instead of counting Christians, we need to weigh them*. We weigh them by focusing on the most important kind of growth—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, kindness, and so on—fruit in keeping with the gospel and the kingdom.” I’m not sure placing scales at the church entrances will help with attendance (!!), but I love Willard’s imagery of focusing on the weight and strength of our discipleship, instead of just focusing on external, quantifiable factors.

### 3.2 Programs - What are we doing (both formally and informally) to fulfill the mission?

Every year, I ask our staff members to submit some highlights and celebrations from the year. I wanted to share a few celebrations, and I hope these will give a picture of why we do what we do.

## Adults

- Several new off-campus groups are emerging across all ages.
- Our first, off-site Men's Retreat this year had an awesome response of around 50 guys.
  - Most guys are still in physical therapy from the impromptu football game that broke out!
- Despite severe weather in November, the Women's Ministry hosted another incredible "My Favorite Things" event, and several of the women's Bible study groups extended their meeting time because of how much they value learning and being together.

## Preschool

- 27 little ones were included in our Parent-Child dedications from November 2023 to 2024.
  - *\*\*Did I mention we REALLY need volunteers for extended session during the service?!*
- When parents bring their little one to Sunday School for the first time, we celebrate that experience in a special way for the family.
- We have a new Nursing Mother's Room that's easily accessible in the main Preschool Hallway.
- New Mommy & Me Playdates are happening at 9:15am on the third Tuesday of each month.

## Kids

- We wrapped up the first cohort and kicked off our second group of Launch405 Missions with the 6th graders. We set the expectations high and the five preteens who committed stretched themselves and thrived in how they led and served.
- We've seen 14 kids' baptisms in 2024 so far, and 6 additional salvations apart from that.
- More than anything, we have some kids who are just really taking their relationships with Christ to another level. It's so fun to see them grasp big concepts, invite their friends, lead out in their classes and in their spaces outside of church.
- The VBS offering was used to help purchase a property for our church partner in Panama.

## The stories of connection and life change continue:

- Students inviting their friends, beginning small group Bible studies, celebrating baptisms with JOY and posters (!), worshiping in spirit and truth.
- Young adults meeting together and connecting with church and ministry.
- Disaster relief, including amazing testimonies from a church family affected by the tornado. They had to convince an OKC police officer that they weren't inviting people over on the morning of the tornado – these people just SHOW UP because that's what the church does.
- A record-breaking Operation Christmas Child collection.
- A Local Missions Celebration Sunday in August, and global mission trips throughout the year.

When it comes to finding a balance between reaching more people (quantity) and building up people in their faith (quality), "programs" is a word that catches a lot of flack. Programs, though, are simply opportunities (on-ramps, catalysts, connections – call it what you want) for people to believe in Jesus for the first time, grow stronger in their belief, and live out this faith with others. Some programs are regular and organized (Sunday School; mission trips); some are occasional and casual (retreats); others are organic and personal (small groups, coffee prayer meetings, text message Bible reading).

When you glance at our church's schedule or one of my weekly emails (or your Sunday School email, bulletin, website, etc), you might think, "We have too many programs and things going on." That might be true, and it has our attention. (\*\*I think you're going to appreciate some of the new communication strategies in 2025.) But remember – you don't have to attend every option! These programs don't all have the same purpose or intended audience. Some events are for the whole church; some are for one group; and some are designed for more personal, individualized involvement. *Instead of just trying to stay busy (when most of us are already too busy), what are we aiming at together??*

#### **4. Beginning with the End in Mind: Proclaim and Display Jesus – UP / IN / OUT**

The "end" for every church should be Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 to make disciples. Jesus is building His Church (Matthew 16:18). The Church's work is meant to start locally and spread globally (Acts 1:8) with an eternal focus on Christ's glory being made known among all people (Revelation 7:9-10) as we grow together in love and maturity (Ephesians 4:11-16).

How do we express this at Emmaus? In our effort to define what it means to be a follower of Jesus, **We Exist to Proclaim and Display Jesus:**

- **UP (through worship – prayer and praise),**
- **IN (through discipleship – encouraging and equipping one another through God's Word, Spirit, and People), and**
- **OUT (through missions – giving and going, locally and globally, through words and actions, where we live, learn, work, and play).**

*Proclaim* is about our *words*. We want to *confess Jesus as Lord*; we want to *speak like Jesus* (truth and love); and we want to *tell others about Jesus*. If someone hangs around Emmaus (and more importantly, hangs around Jesus), it should change how that person speaks.

*Display* is about our *actions*. We want to live *all of life, all for Jesus*. We want to care for those in need through actions that come from a transformed heart and life. This means being on guard against acting religious on the outside (or in public) while internally (or in private) our life is a mess. Words AND actions; inside AND outside – they need to match, because religious hypocrisy is toxic.

*Every program, event, group, or ministry should help you grow in one of these areas – UP, IN, OUT.*

Let's take Joe (\*fake name – not a Joe here at Emmaus!). He shows up on Sunday morning (UP). People who sit around him learn his name...probably after multiple weeks and several embarrassing, awkward conversations (IN). Joe's life has been in shambles, but God got Joe's attention and eventually Joe confesses Jesus as Lord and is baptized (UP). In the meantime, one of the guys sitting around Joe invites him to join a Bible reading group (IN). Joe attends a men's breakfast (IN) and finds out we have a group of guys who maintain the mobile ultrasound unit for Hope Pregnancy Center. He knows vehicles, and his own family has been impacted by abortion, so he wants to help with the ultrasound unit (OUT). Joe joins the Emmaus security team (IN) and ends up inviting a friend from work to join him on Sunday mornings (OUT / UP).

Sarah (\*you guessed it – fake name) hasn't been to church in years. She desperately needed a break from the kids, so a lady invited her to a women's ministry event (IN). Sarah loved the interaction and, largely out of guilt and obligation, agreed to attend a Sunday morning worship service (UP). She barely survived the worship service with her kids, but found out there are Bible study groups for kids at 9:15 and this would be another hour for her to hang out with women (IN). The kids loved their class and begged to attend an event. Sarah was homeless as a teenager and finds out she can volunteer with Building Bridges, a group that is building homes for Moore Public School kids who are homeless (OUT). Sarah was baptized as a kid, but she's really confused about that experience and is now learning a lot about God's grace and love. She confesses Jesus as Lord and is baptized (UP). That night one of her kids wants to know how to be saved, and she prays with her elementary daughter to trust in Jesus as well (OUT / UP).

Can you imagine more stories like this? Teenagers navigating the anxiety of high school? Senior adults dealing with fear and pain? Empty-nest couples wondering about their next season of life? Young men trying to navigate work, YouTube masculinity, and relationships?

*What would it look like for next year's State of the Church Address to include a real-life story that God gave you the opportunity to be part of?!*

What will it take this next year for God to create stories of life change and eternal impact through your life? What does He want to do in your life and in our church family in 2025?

### **5. Beginning with the End in Mind: Strength that Transforms Lives**

While I'm pretty pessimistic about super-specific plans for the future, I do think there's a lot of value in big picture ideas and frameworks. As a reminder from page 1, here's the broad picture for Emmaus:

- **2024 - 2026 : Frame #1 = "Strengthen"** == John's Gospel and writings
  - *2026 – \*40th Anniversary (Monday, Dec 7, 2026 // to be celebrated on Dec 6th)*
- **2027 - 2029 : Frame #2 = "Transition"** == Exodus and Ephesians
  - *2030 – \*Celebrate 2000 Years of Christ's Public Ministry*
- **2030 - 2032 : Frame #3 = "Live like Jesus"** == Gospel of Luke
  - *2033 – \*Celebrate 2000 Years of the Resurrection and the Church*
- **2033 - 2035 : Frame #4 = "Be the Church"** == Book of Acts
  - *2036 – \*50th Anniversary (Sunday, Dec 7, 2036)*

*What does this mean for 2025? Before we can move fully into the next steps for our church family, we need to grow stronger together.* If we can establish certain pillars of strength, we'll be prepared for any number of challenges and opportunities that might come our way beyond Year 40. So, when I think about the coming year, I'm praying God will strengthen us in four areas.

### 1. **Strengthen our *Financial Base* for the Budget and Future Projects**

- a. Most of this discussion is in tonight's portion of the Address (see below).
- b. What are the main focuses?
  - i. Increase Budgeted Giving to Build Margin, Absorb Inflation, and Match Growth  
\*\*Generosity! Tithes and Offerings – we're all in this together.
  - ii. Increase the Future Building Budget Line Item
  - iii. Identify Additional Sources of Funds (estates/wills, diverse revenue streams, etc)
  - iv. Establish a *Transition Advisory Team to Focus on the Master Plan and Finances*

### 2. **Strengthen our *Missional Focus***

- a. Most of this discussion is in tonight's portion of the Address (see below).
- b. Evaluate mission partnerships through a *Missions Advisory Team* (already in-process)
- c. Establish a *40th Anniversary Advisory Team*

### 3. **Strengthen our *Relational Base* of Disciple-making and Leadership Development**

- a. We'll focus on this tonight by studying John 21
  - i. \*Spoiler alert: relationships require healing and reconciliation that comes when we encounter Jesus' grace and presence.
  - ii. Also, relationships usually require meals, sitting around the fire pit, serving together, and appreciating differences.
- b. Moving into 2025, here's one way to think about relationships in the church (I first learned this from Luke Simmons, pastor at Ironwood Church in Arizona; it's based on an older book by Joseph Meyer):
  - i. **Public** - know the person's **face**; in the same church
  - ii. **Social** - know the person's **name** (if I can remember!); in the same circles
  - iii. **Personal** - know the person's **story**; in the same group
  - iv. **Intimate** - know the person's **heart**; in the person's closest relationship(s)

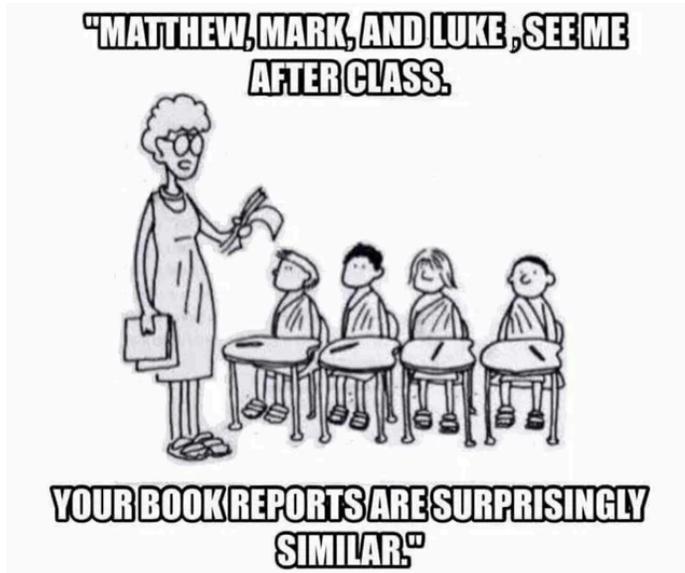
### 4. **Strengthen our *Biblical and Theological Focus***

- a. Where does strength come from? In the Bible, we find that *true strength comes not from ourselves but from trusting in God's strength.*
  - i. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)
  - ii. "God said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- b. My hope is you will grow stronger this year as we believe more deeply in the power and presence of Christ in your life. How will this happen? Much of the focus in 2025 will be on John's Gospel.

## 6. Beginning with the End in Mind: Belief that Leads to Life (John 20:30-31)

Starting this week and through 2025, we are going to study the Gospel of John on Sunday mornings.<sup>2</sup>

John is the fourth book in the New Testament. These first four books are called the Gospels. They tell the story of Jesus from four distinct angles. The first three books are often given the academic-sounding label “synoptic Gospels.” Synoptic is a fancy word for seeing together, or seeing at the same time. In other words, these first three Gospels are very similar, even using the same stories, order, and wording in many cases.



John...well, he's different! He wouldn't have had to stay after class because of plagiarizing. John tells many unique stories of Jesus, and he tells the stories in a unique order, with unique wording, and with a unique theological perspective. I don't mean that John presents a different theology or different beliefs about Jesus; he just goes about it in a different way. Instead of beginning with Jesus' birth (like Matthew or Luke) or Jesus' ministry (like Mark), John begins at the beginning – or actually, before the beginning.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” - John 1:1-3*

Why does he begin here? Well, he tells us later, near the very end of the Gospel.

*“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” - John 20:30-31*

<sup>2</sup> At the end of this Address is an appendix with an overview of all sermon series for the past 9 years. On Sunday mornings in 2024, I preached 45 out of 52 weeks. The general range is 42 - 46 wks/yr.

**John began with the end in mind!** Everything he wrote in the Gospel was designed to lead people towards a very specific end: “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” How will we grow stronger? Believe! But...how does this belief happen? To find out, let’s break down verse 30 into its individual parts.

## 6.1 “These things have been written...”

What things? Well, John tells us in the previous verse – “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.”

Then, in 21:25 – “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

So, John has purposefully selected stories and organized the material to help people believe in Jesus. How has he done this?

### 6.1.1 Studying the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is often described as having two parts:

- the Book of Signs (chapters 1-12), and
- the Book of Glory (chapters 13-21).

The Book of Signs includes 7 “I am” statements about Jesus and 7 “Signs” that Jesus did to show His identity and power. The Book of Signs overwhelms us with the power, glory, purity, love, and truth of Jesus. He confronts religious leaders, helps the hurting, and is constantly in tune with the Father. The Book of Glory includes Jesus’ preparation for His death, His death on the Cross, and the events after His Resurrection. This section emphasizes that Jesus’ victory came *through* suffering, not in spite of it. His Glory was shown through the Cross, the Resurrection, and the giving of His Holy Spirit.

In Chapter 20, John gives us a quick list of stories specifically about faith:

- Peter and John racing to the tomb, only to find it empty (John won the race, and subtly included it in his book, effectively stunting on Peter for the next 2,000+ years!)
- Mary Magdalene encountering Jesus in the Garden,
- the disciples hanging out in a locked room, only to find Jesus mysteriously standing with them,
- and then, purposefully placed just before verses 30-31, we find our buddy Thomas struggling to believe unless he can see Jesus and touch the marks from His crucifixion.

While it would’ve been amazing to see Jesus after the Resurrection and to touch the scars in his hands and side, John tells us that most people will believe in Jesus because of the stories that have been passed down and selected in Scripture. This means we need to know – and put into action – the Scriptures so we can grow stronger in our faith.

## 6.1.2 Advent Devotionals

To help you prepare for 2025, we've put together a 24-day Advent Devotion leading up to the 4pm Christmas Eve service. You can pick up a copy of this devotion when you leave today. Or, if you prefer receiving a daily email, the first email will go out this afternoon and then subsequent emails will be sent each morning. (If you don't receive today's email but would like to do so, let me know and I'll add you. If you previously unsubscribed from my emails – but now you're regretting that decision and will apologize with sackcloth, ashes, and tears – I'll likely be willing to add you back to the list!)

The devotion will include a memory verse for us to work on as a church, a section about prayer, and a short devotion about faith. The faith devotions will alternate between stories of faith from Scripture and stories of faith from our church staff. These testimonies from the staff are short answers about *how their faith in God began* and *what has sustained and strengthened their faith* over the years. I hope these are encouraging and helpful...plus they lead us directly into the next phrase in John 20.

### \*\*\*2025 Commitment for “*These things have been written*” = *Receive God's Word*

1. *Engage with the Gospel of John through sermons and/or through another Bible reading plan (many of our members have utilized “The Bible” Recap” from Tara Lee Cobble)*
2. *Utilize the Advent Devotionals leading up to Christmas*

## 6.2 “So that you may believe...”

What does it mean to believe? James wrote, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19) Based on this verse, we know that believing is obviously more than simply affirming, intellectually or emotionally, that God exists. Believing means that we put our confidence and hope completely in the Lord. Belief is a matter of the heart, receiving what God has done for us and giving our total allegiance to Him.

Even still, the phrase in John 20:31 – “so that you may believe” – is surprisingly confusing because there are two ways it can be interpreted (and I'm going to argue that both matter).

- **One interpretive option** is: “so that you may believe (for the first time).” In this way, John has written his Gospel so unbelievers will put their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. We should probably call this the “**Salvation**” approach.
- **Another option** is: “so that you may (continue to) believe.” In this way, John is writing to encourage and sustain the faith of Jesus' followers. Let's call this the “**Strengthen**” approach.

You might be asking – Could it be both? In a broad sense, I think that's correct! John certainly wants people to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah and worship Him as the Son of the Living God. John also knew the pressure followers of Jesus would face to recant their faith and turn away from the Lord. So, he wrote to strengthen and sustain their faith in Jesus, reminding them of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and promised Holy Spirit.

I think we can find a connection with the father in Mark 8. Jesus healed his son, but the man seemed uncertain this could happen. After his son was healed, the father cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Sometimes I feel like this should be my life’s motto.)

The two sides of the belief coin represent the two parts of our testimony of faith – how we began to believe in Jesus and how this faith has been strengthened and encouraged throughout our lives.

**\*\*\*2025 Commitment for “So that you may believe” = Develop your Story of Faith**

1. *Where did your faith begin?*
2. *Who/what has strengthened your faith?*

Faith isn’t ultimately about the amount of faith we have. Faith is only as good as its object. As Christians, what is the object of our faith? What is John’s focus in his Gospel?

**6.3 “That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God...”**

One thing we’ll find over the next year is that John is the master at interweaving Jewish and Greek concepts. (Said another way – he shows us what it looks like to talk to religious people on the inside and also to those who might feel like outsiders.)

John seems to do this purposefully so his message will land with a wide-ranging, global audience, while also acknowledging that salvation is from the Jews – first for the Jews, then to the Gentiles. Many of John’s concepts connect simultaneously with the Old Testament and with the wider Greco-Roman world around him.

To say Jesus is the Christ is to make a directly Jewish claim. The people of God had awaited their Messiah (Messiah is the Hebrew word; Christ is the Greek word). This Messiah would rescue and restore the people of God. Their concept of Messiah took many forms over the years, but John (and other writers in the New Testament) are making the claim that God has finally visited His people with ultimate salvation and hope. How? The Lord – Jesus – Christ!

Even more amazingly, this Messiah turns out to be the Son of the One True Living God. “Son of God” is a Jewish concept, for sure, but it would’ve also resonated with Greeks who knew their ancient mythologies (Hercules, Hercules, Hercules) and understood the concepts of gods and their children.

**\*\*\*2025 Commitment for “Jesus is the Christ” = Grow in amazement of Jesus’ Life and Ministry**

1. *The Christ - See Jesus’ connections with the Old Testament and Judaism*
2. *The Son of the Living God - See Jesus’ global and cosmic connections*

When we put our faith fully in Jesus, what is the result of this faith?

## 6.4 “And that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Not surprisingly by this point, the concept of “life” has two sides in John’s Gospel. (Unfortunately, I think John is going to make me set aside my love for the #3, and instead focus on 7’s, 4’s, and 2’s.)

You might remember John 10:10 - *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

Life in John certainly includes life beyond the brokenness and death of this world. At the same time, John is famous for describing eternal life in such a way that eternal life has come crashing into this world. Eternal life doesn’t wait until death; this abundant life begins now! I hope this ends up being one of the greatest gifts you receive from John’s Gospel. Yes, there’s suffering. Yes, life is hard. But eternal, abundant, God-given, Jesus-shaped, Spirit-empowered life is available now!

For Christians, having believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, our focus is not ultimately on “the end.” Why? Because we know we’re simply living at the end of the beginning. The only end we look towards is an end of sin, death, tears, and pain. This will come when Jesus returns to establish the New Creation. But this hope of New Creation life also changes everything about how we live now – seeking God’s Kingdom, seeking to share with others the life that is possible through faith in Jesus, seeking to experience the power and transformation of God’s Spirit.

In the final portion of *The Last Battle*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

**\*\*\*2025 Commitment for “Life in His Name” = Experience the fullness of Jesus’ life and power**

1. *Experience Peace - the Hope of Eternal Life to Come*
2. *Experience Joy - the Power of Eternal Life Now*

## 7. The Table

Today, as we wrap up this morning’s service, we have a chance to act on the two sides of John’s coin of belief: Salvation (beginning faith) and Strength (growing faith).

### 7.1 Salvation

For some, today is the day of salvation. You ended up at church on the Sunday after Thanksgiving; you had to hear about attendance numbers and church plans; but unexpectedly, the truth came to you that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior, that He is the Son of God who takes away your sins and overcomes death. When you trust in Jesus, receiving His salvation and giving Him allegiance, you receive LIFE! Life that extends into eternity, and abundant life that begins now.

If you are ready to trust in Jesus for salvation, we have pastors who stand at the front immediately after the service. You can go to those around you for prayer and encouragement. Plus, you can pray right where you are – “Jesus, I believe You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that only You can give eternal life. I entrust my life to You. Please forgive me and save me.”

## 7.2 Lord's Supper

If you are already a follower of Jesus – you have believed in Him for salvation – we are going to begin Advent by taking the Lord's Supper together. By coming to the Table today, you are declaring that you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that you have life because of Him: His death, burial, and resurrection.

I know many of us grew up in churches where we took the Lord's Supper by passing plates of crackers and cups of juice along the rows. We stopped doing this several years ago for a couple of reasons. Partly, Covid; passing the elements in front of hundreds of our closest friends just didn't seem like the best approach. But, more importantly and more theologically, we want the Lord's Supper to be an act of worship. By getting up and approaching the tables, we symbolically experience what it means to draw near to Christ. Even better, we approach the tables together. Yes, the aisles and tables can get a little crowded, and yes, the cups sometimes stick together, but the process is part of worship (and the cups usually come apart if you stubbornly twist them back and forth)

At the Table, we worship together – loving, encouraging, and serving one another.

The Table is about faith and belief.

The Table is about being strengthened by Christ and one another.

We look back, remembering what has been written about Jesus, and we look forward to His Return, when He will make all things new. In between those events, we BELIEVE! God, help our unbelief!

Let me pray for us, and we will close this morning's service by taking the Lord's Supper together.

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*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

Tonight's Game Plan:

- Finish the Property and Personnel Sections
- Lay out some specific plans for 2025
- Use John 21 as an encouragement and challenge for our church family

## **8. People, Personnel, Programs, Property (Part 2)**

### **8.1 Personnel - Who is serving, equipping, and leading the way (staff and volunteers)?**

In the Summer of 2021, we hired Cody Moser to lead students.

In the Summer of 2022, we hired Kennedy Lehew to lead missions.

In the Summer of 2023, we hired Nola Moseley as Office Assistant and Paula Lawson as Preschool Director for both church-based preschool and the weekday Compass program.

In 2024, we hired...no one (at least full-time). Allie Lawson began working with our Students as an Intern, and we hired a few people on the custodial staff; but for the first time since I've been at Emmaus, we are fully staffed. Not only are we fully staffed, but the staff members do an amazing job working together and serving the church family.

When Nola began working in the office, she mentioned how much the staff members laugh together. We're perfectly capable of getting frustrated with one another or failing to communicate (that's usually me), but I thank God for the team we have in place. We know change is inevitable when it comes to personnel, but it's a gift to work here, and we'll just focus on being faithful and working hard, trusting the Lord to take care of changes when they come.

Speaking of Personnel, I wanted to give a quick update on my own season of life. I can't believe 9 years have passed since my family came to Emmaus. This church family is incredible! We love being here and praise God for the opportunity to be part of His work alongside you.

This year is unique for my family because our oldest daughter turns 18 and is a senior; our son turns 16; and our youngest daughter turns 13 and has entered the youth ministry. So, this is our one year with all three kids in the youth group...all three will be teenagers...a second one begins driving next week...and the first one will graduate high school soon. Be patient with me and pray for my wife!

At last month's Annual Meeting for Oklahoma Baptists, I was elected as 1st Vice President for Oklahoma Baptist churches. This position simply means that I will pray hard that the Oklahoma Baptist President doesn't move out of state or stop pastoring! I don't anticipate the VP role will take away from my responsibilities at Emmaus, and I will work hard to make sure the role isn't a distraction. (All funny Vice-President memes and jokes are appreciated, though.)

One other update for the upcoming Spring – I’ve been asked to teach Greek for the Prison Divinity Program of Oklahoma Baptist University at the Lexington Penitentiary. This Prison Divinity Program is a source of light and hope in the Oklahoma prison system. We graduate our first cohort of students in May (assuming they can survive my Greek class). The class will require me to get into the office a little later than normal on Mondays and Wednesdays for the first four months of the year; however, I will make up the hours at other times, and it’s only a one-semester commitment. Plus, by teaching the class at Lexington, Emmaus will have a chance to be linked with the incredible Gospel advancement that’s happening behind prison doors in Oklahoma.

## **8.2 Property - How are we utilizing land, facilities, and resources to fulfill the mission?**

### *West Property*

The work from the past few years on the West Property is yielding fruit. We’re seeing multiple groups use the pavilion and practice fields. Last month, over 600 people participated in the ALS Foundation Walk-a-thon (this group is close to my heart because of my late uncle’s battle with ALS, plus I know this disease has impacted our church family directly). The parking lot, pavilion, and back field turned out to be a perfect location for the Fall Fest! Plus, the basketball goal and volleyball courts are a great resource for our kids and teenagers. It’ll be fun to utilize this space for additional events in the future!

### *Facilities and Property Oversight*

None of the ministry in the back property (or really anywhere on campus) would be possible without four people: Pat Cardona, Roger Kilgore, Todd Pepper, and Jeff Meyer.

- Pat is a weekly, one-man version of a “church work day.” He maintains equipment, mows the back field, manages flower beds, and does a thousand other things behind the scenes.
- Roger works non-stop behind the scenes to make sure our internet, technology, and AVL systems are working and updated.
- If you don’t know Todd, he’s the guy walking around the building with a different colored goatee every week! I’m so thankful for how Emmaus is able to host birthday parties, showers, school programs, and community events. None of this would be possible, though, without Todd. He not only opens the doors and sets up chairs, but he shows Christian love and hospitality to those who use our building throughout the week.
- For over 10 years, Jeff Meyer has been our Facilities Director. His job was supposed to be part-time...but he’s given above and beyond to take care of the building and minister to both Emmaus volunteers and contractors from the community.

Beginning in 2025, Jeff Meyer is going to transition out of his Facilities Director role. He’ll probably still be at the building quite often helping with projects, but he’ll no longer have to worry about overall responsibility for the facilities. That role will transfer to Jeff Hemphill. So...if you have a question about the building, I’ll still tell you the same thing: “Call Jeff!”

In addition to serving as our Discipleship Pastor, Jeff has been helping me this past year with additional administrative and executive tasks. Taking over the facilities role will fit with what he's already been doing, but this new responsibility will only be possible by establishing a team of volunteers from the church family who will commit to taking ownership for individual tasks and areas around the property. The goal is for Jeff to focus on connecting our members to one of the many, MANY pieces of Jeff Meyer's current job description. If you love to serve or have expertise in a certain area (or have illogical confidence about your ability to learn how to do something from watching YouTube), please let us know!

## **9. Framework Plans for 2025**

As I mentioned this morning, 2025 represents the middle year of the first of four frames.

- **Frame #1: Strengthen (2024-2026)**
  - ***Strengthen our Financial Base for the Budget, Missions, and the Master Plan***
    - Increase Budgeted Giving to Build Margin, Absorb Inflation, and Match Growth
    - Increase the Future Building Budget Line Item
    - Identify Additional Sources of Funds
    - Establish a *Transition Advisory Team to Focus on the Master Plan and Finances*
  - ***Strengthen our Missional Focus***
    - Evaluate mission partnerships through a *Missions Advisory Team*
    - Establish a *40th Anniversary Advisory Team*
  - ***Strengthen our Relational Base of Disciple-making and Leadership Development***
    - We'll talk more about this below, when we look at John 21.
  - ***Strengthen our Biblical and Theological Focus***
    - See the discussion from this morning, especially the role of John 20:30-31.
- **Frame #2: Transition (2027-2029)**
- **Frame #3: Live Like Jesus (2030-2032)**
- **Frame #4: Be the Church (2033-2035)**

We won't spend a lot of time on each area, but I want to let you know about some very specific steps and teams that will develop over the next year.

### **9.1 Strengthen our Financial Base**

As I began writing this section, I almost began with: "I wish the missions and ministry projects at church didn't require money, but they do." However, that's not a helpful mindset! First off, much of what we've been called to do as a church doesn't require money. Some of the greatest movements in the history of the church have happened among believers who had almost no resources or funds.

At the same time, God uses money and resources not only to advance the Gospel and help the poor, but also to strengthen His people. This is an area where I need to grow as a pastor. Instead of being afraid to ask you to give, I need to remember financial sacrifice is part of God's GOOD plan for His people, and we need to respond with generosity and joy when it comes to being stewards of what God has given us. Be patient with me in this process. I struggle with guilt and people-pleasing...but we have too many good things happening to shy away from asking people to give!

What does this mean for 2025 and beyond?

- Increase Budgeted Giving to Build Margin, Absorb Inflation, and Match Growth
  - Tonight, we considered the first budget in Emmaus history above \$2 million.
  - This budget will require all of us to partner together through consistent, faithful giving.
- Increase the Future Building Budget Line Item
  - A big portion of the \$2M+ budget is the increased future building budget line item.
    - **2024** - projected Future Building Budget Line = \$150,000
    - **2025** - projected Future Building Budget Line = \$200,000
    - **2026** - projected Future Building Budget Line = \$250,000
    - **2027** - projected Future Building Budget Line = \$300,000
  - This line has two purposes: build a foundation to pursue our next building project (likely a preschool and children's space) and "train" ourselves for what it would be like to make yearly payments on a loan for this future building. By slowly working this amount into the budget, we'll be prepared to wisely assess future building decisions.
- Identify Additional Sources of Funds
  - Consistent tithes and offerings will be the core of our budget for years to come.
  - At the same time, we need to identify additional sources of funding. These will likely include estates, trusts, and miraculous gifts, plus we may be able to find creative and appropriate ways to receive money through the Emmaus property.
- Establish a **Transition Advisory Team** to Focus on the Master Plan and Finances
  - Looking ahead, we need to reassess our Master Plan and determine next steps for fundraising, project design, and strategic planning.
  - By this Spring, I hope to have a Transition Advisory Team in place to begin praying and discussing next steps.

## 9.2 Strengthen our Missional Focus

To strengthen our Missional Focus, Kennedy launched a **Missions Advisory Team** this past year. I can't tell you how impressed I've been by the work of this team! When I first began pastoring, I was shocked by the number of mailers, emails, and personal requests I received for mission partnerships.

Most of these are great options, but the amount of in-bound communication is overwhelming. We can't – and shouldn't – do everything. To strengthen missions, we need to be focused. This focus comes partly through Cooperative Programs efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention and also through establishing local and global partnerships at Emmaus. Most of these partnerships are for three years, with the opportunity to reassess along the way. We don't want to continue a partnership simply out of guilt or obligation. The Missions Advisory Team helps Kenedy pray through and discern how to allocate resources and balance the church calendar.

What about your favorite ministry or missionary that we're not able to partner with on a church wide level? Many small groups and Sunday School classes have mission projects that go beyond what we're able to do as a church. Plus, many individuals and families support missionaries and ministry organizations even if their group or the whole church isn't able to provide direct financial support.

\*For the Missional Focus, we need to take another step in 2025: a **40th Anniversary Advisory Team**. This team will help us prepare for Emmaus's 40th birthday in 2026, including plans for prayer, worship, Bible reading, and mission projects. I'm hoping to have this team in place by the end of February so we can meet in late Winter/early Spring to begin brainstorming.

## **10. Strengthen our Relational Base: John 21**

This morning we studied John 20:31, with the phrase "Begin with the end in mind." But, John 20:31 isn't the actual end of John's Gospel. (This has caused some debates among scholars. Is chapter 21 a later addition from John's followers? Was it added later by John himself? Or...like a lot of literature, does John simply provide a final section to wrap up a few unanswered questions?)

John 21 includes three separate stories with an overarching theme: restoring relationships with God and with others. When we believe in Jesus, we are made part of the Body of Christ, the Church. We all live in a web of relationships – with God, with others, with the community and world around us, with self. And relationships are hard! And messy!

The first story in John 21:1-14 has powerful imagery (and a few moments of humor). To pick a couple:

- The disciples are fishing at night and Jesus appears to them in the morning – a sort of second experience of the Resurrection appearances.
- Jesus has provided a meal of fish and bread. Where did he get these? We're not told...but he's proven before to have special abilities with fish and bread.
- The last time Peter stood over a charcoal fire, he denied Jesus; now, Jesus has provided another fire to restore Peter.
- Through the breakfast meal, the disciples come to know Jesus' identity with confidence (\*\*think about Jesus eating a meal with the men on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24).
- Following the Resurrection of Jesus, many fish will be gathered into the Kingdom of God. The fish must be cared for. \*Notice that Peter goes back into the water to bring the catch of fish to the shore.

In verse 15, the imagery moves from fish to sheep. Just as Peter denied Jesus three times, now Jesus restores Peter three times. Instead of remaining in despair or being forced to overcome his previous faults through personal effort, Peter is restored to Jesus through Jesus' words and presence. (Some scholars focus on small differences in the words used by Peter and Jesus, but the core of the story has to do with Peter's restoration and commission.)

Finally, verses 20-23 show a bit of the on-going rivalry and tension between Peter and John. These men served together for many years. John beat Peter in a foot race to the empty tomb. Peter swam to shore ahead of John. John is the consistent picture of steady faith; Peter is the ultimate picture of impulsive, imperfect, but powerful faith. Now, Peter asks Jesus what will happen with John (since we've just been told that Peter will die one day for his bold faith in Jesus). Jesus essentially says, "That's none of your business. You focus on following me."

Jesus did many other things, but John was out of time, and so are we.

What are some lessons we can learn from this final chapter?

- *\*Jesus loves to provide abundantly and miraculously for His people.*
- *\*Jesus loves to restore lives that are broken, hurting, and confused.*
- *\*Jesus loves to restore relationships that, unless restored, will hinder the work of the church.*

We will face many challenges in the years ahead, including external challenges from the culture and world around us. But, for any church, nothing compares to the internal struggles of broken lives and broken relationships. We are called to believe, grow, and serve together.

To do this, we will need meals together. We will need meals of fish and bread – and The Meal of bread and wine. We'll need lots of time around fire pits. We'll need hard conversations that provide healing and restoration. We'll need reminders to avoid rivalry and trust that God doesn't work in the same ways, or at the same speed, with every person. We're tempted to say to the Lord, "Yeah, but what about *that* person?" His answer? "Follow me."

The Body of Christ is strengthened by the fact that we're not all the same. Some are slow and steady, with abstract thinking and the wisdom of old age. Others are impulsive and reactive, operating with concrete thinking and a fire-ready-aim style of faith. People have different experiences, weaknesses, and gifts. Through the Spirit of God, we can celebrate the diversity of the Body of Christ and seek His love to unify us for the mission ahead.

As Gary Burge writes in his commentary on John, "Ministry is thus the service of healed men and women who understand their personal histories (and handicaps) well, who have made their brokenness transparent before God, and have been forgiven as well as transformed by the Spirit of God."

What's the best way to prepare for 2025...or 2036...or tomorrow?

- Talk to someone on the way out the door today.
- Pray as you head to bed.
- Sleep well knowing the Lord is in control.
- Wake up tomorrow trusting in God's abundant love and life.
- Make a phone call this week to encourage someone or pursue reconciliation and healing.
- Show up next Sunday morning ready to learn someone's name, learn someone's story, and study John 1:1-3.

**Remember: Eternal Focus / Daily Faithfulness!**

More than once, we have ended the State of the Church Address with Ephesians 3:14-21, and that's where I want to end again tonight before we transition to a time of prayer.

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*



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## Appendix 1 - Sermon Overview

(**Bold = Sunday AM sermon series**; *Italics = Sunday PM or Wednesday PM services*)

Books of the Bible

- *Leviticus (2018-2019)*
- *Numbers (2023-2024)*
- **Joshua (chs 1-7 2017; chs 8-24 2018)**
- *Judges (2018)*
- **Ruth (2018)**
- **Ezra (2021)**
- **Nehemiah (2021)**
- **Esther (2021)**
- **Psalms (various)**
- **Proverbs (2016)**
- *Jeremiah (2025)*
- **Daniel (2021)**
- **Minor Prophets (2024)**
- **Matthew (2018-2020)**
- **Mark (2022-2023)**
- **John (2025)**
- **1 Corinthians 12-16 (2018)**
- **Galatians (2020)**
- **Colossians (2017)**
- **1 Thessalonians (2016)**
- *2 Thessalonians (2016)*
- *1 Timothy (2017)*
- *2 Timothy (2017)*
- **Titus (2017)**
- **Philemon (2017)**
- **Hebrews (2023-2024)**
- *1 Peter (2022)*
- *2 Peter (2023)*
- *Jude (2023)*
- **Revelation 1-3 (2016)**

Themes/Theology

- **3 Circles Evangelism / Acts 17 (2016)**
- *World Religions (2016)*
- **Music “weTunes” (2017)**
- **Holiness / Sanctification “Holey, Wholly, Holy” (2018)**
- **Sports (2018)**
- *Ten Commandments (2019)*
- **Who is God? (2020)**
- **UnLIMITed: The Gift of Limits (2020)**
- **Fruit of the Spirit (2021)**
- **Fresh Start (2021)**
- *Twelve Apostles (2021)*
- **Women of Christmas (2021)**
- **“I Doubt It” (2022)**
- **“Foundations, not Fences” / Hard Issues: sexuality, money, politics, etc (2022)**
- **Rest (2023)**
- **Generations (2024)**
- **Words and Thoughts (2025)**

## Appendix 2 - Phase 2 Overview and Considerations

### What is the current version of Phase 2 of the Master Plan?

- New Preschool and Children's Building (two-story), attached to the Worship Center by a Connection Atrium. In the current plan, the north two-thirds of Building B would be demolished.

### Why build a new Preschool and Children's Building?

- **Security** - we currently have *way too many* access points to the Preschool/Children's area. These areas need controlled access both for security purposes and parent-child check-in.
- **Tight Hallways / Small Rooms** - Our Preschool and Children's leaders have made the most of repurposing old spaces, but the rooms are undersized and the hallways are much too small.
- **Passed over previously** - Over 15 years ago, Emmaus had to decide between a new Worship Center (previous location was in what is now the Gym of Building C) and a Preschool/Children's building. To handle crowds in three worship services, a new Worship Center was built, with hopes of adding or updating the Preschool/Children's space as soon as possible.
- **Key marker of ministry** - For a church located in a suburban area, a solid Preschool and Children's building can be one tool to catalyze ministry for generations to come.
- **Compass Christian Preschool** - A new Preschool and Children's building would allow more opportunities for growth and ministry with our weekday preschool.

### Why *not* build a new Preschool and Children's Building (at least in its currently planned form)?

- **Cost** - the new building will be extremely expensive (originally estimated at \$6M+, up to \$8M).
- **Intended and best location is inconvenient** - several people who have looked at the property have suggested demolition of Building B. We always want to be cautious about demolishing buildings, even if they're older. Plus, the demolition and rebuild would be expensive and alter programming for a couple of years.
- **Changing demographics / Changing needs of families** - we're very thankful for our current Worship Center, but one thing we've learned since its construction is that we built a style that was already dated as it was being constructed. The building is nice, but lacks flexibility. We don't want to make the same mistake with a Preschool and Children's Building. We don't need a building like this simply because other churches have one; we need a building that is flexible and functional enough to accommodate changing generations and needs.

### Could we reposition or redesign elements in the Master Plan?

- Yes, the Master Plan (and the proposed location for the Preschool/Children's Building) is a working document, not a contract. We still need formal church approval to proceed with Phase 2. Over the next couple of years, the Staff will work alongside the ad-hoc Transition Team and the Building Committee to determine what plan will be presented to the church in 2026.
- We want the building to be visible to guests and community members and also accessible and easy for young parents. As we further assess plans, we might find new ways to build a fresh Preschool and Children's space, while also optimizing foot traffic, securing the buildings, and connecting with guests.