

Emmaus Baptist Church — State of the Church Address
Wednesday, December 5, 2018

Where We are Now

As we begin tonight, I want to quote from my 2016 State of the Church paper. Here's what I wrote:

"Year two, and especially year three, can be bumpy for a church and their new pastor. Thom Rainer, who is a Southern Baptist executive and researcher, has done a lot of work in this area. He points out that 'beyond the first year, the church begins seeing the imperfections in the pastor's ministry (and are less afraid to point these out to him), and the pastor finds out that promises from the congregation--especially promises of being open and receptive to change--were unfulfilled. It's impossible to meet everyone's expectations; and during the second and third year, both the members and pastor easily become disillusioned and dissatisfied.'"

"Rainer goes on to note, 'During the second and third year, the church gains a number of new members who arrived under the present pastor's tenure. It's not uncommon for longer-term members, especially those in positions of influence or volunteer roles, to feel threatened or frustrated by the changes as new people move into the core of the church. After a long-term pastorate [such as Emmaus had recently], the next pastor often doesn't last long because, just as it's difficult for new members to break into an established situation, it's equally hard for a new pastor to break into well-established networks.'"

I'm not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but those observations in 2016 have matched our journey together. We had some challenges in Years 2 and 3. It definitely wasn't all about challenges — in fact, there was way more good than bad — but enough challenges that I ugly-cried at the Spring 2018 Business Meeting and those in attendance responded by circling around me for prayer, which was one of the most powerful moments I've had as a pastor. It was also one of the funniest too, because as I was bent over in tears, nearly hyper-ventilating, Dale McCoy was asked to pray for me and the church. I love Dale with all my heart; but when the pastor is crying and the church is gathered around in support and tears, Dale might not be the guy to hold his emotions together. Or, now that I think about it, Dale was probably the perfect person to pray at the time. Lord knows, I appreciate that man and want to be like him in his love for others.

So, let's get back to the present. Now, as we have completed Year 3 together and look ahead, I want to share my feelings and mindset. Throughout the past year, and even more so at this moment today, when I see challenges for Emmaus, my gut-reaction is to go "through" not "around" the challenge. And I think this is important, because the moment a leader starts to run away from or try to go around challenges, is the moment the leader either has to find a way to recharge or the organization needs to look elsewhere.

In his assessment of pastoral ministry tenure, Thom Rainer calls Years 4 and 5 'The Crossroads, Part 1.' Here's how he describes those years. "This period is one of the most critical in the relationship. If the conflict was severe, the pastor will likely leave or be forced out. Indeed, these years, four and five, are the most common years when a pastor leaves a church. On the other hand, if the pastor and the church manage their relationship well, they can often look forward to some of the best years ahead." In fact, Rainer goes on to call Years 6-10 the Fruit and Harvest period.

As we enter Year 4 together, where does this leave us? It's simple: I don't want to be anywhere else, with anyone else. We have plenty of challenges ahead, but I want to go through them with you. We are at a crossroads, but I also believe we're ready to move ahead. The question is - what will this look like and how will we do it?

I want to take a quick look at the year in review, then walk us again through our UP, IN, and OUT strategy, and finally mention a couple of ideas for the future.

Looking Back

Maybe my favorite "new tradition" we have at Emmaus is the reading of a person's testimony before baptism. We don't want to simply count numbers; we want to celebrate life change and tell stories. Young kids who quietly but confidently share with their parents about trusting Jesus. An older woman who steps out in faith to share about Jesus' work in her life after years away from church and after diagnosis of a life-changing disease. A young couple who will be baptized on Christmas Eve this year to display their faith in Christ and their desire to be part of the church.

And there are even more stories about ministry impact throughout our community. Over the past two months, as a church we have been able to...

- Help a hurting, single mom find a safe place,
- Provide food and resources for another mom in distress,
- Offer prayer and peace to an unchurched family in our community facing a crisis,
- Finish a complete house build for a family in need,
- Host several banquets for our local schools, and
- Update our Prayer Room and Office areas.

What about some actual numbers and data?

This past year, we've added 70 new members, averaged 550 in the Worship Center for the 10:30am worship gathering, and had an average total of 617 people on-campus each Sunday at 10:30 including preschool and kids. The 550 Worship Center average compares with 548 for 2017, so an increase of 2 people. We'd certainly like to grow by more than 2 people in worship over the course of a year (and we'll talk in a moment about some important factors for this growth), but 2018 also saw several dozen people leave in the first few months. And yet, amid people leaving, our attendance and financial giving stayed steady, with giving actually averaging more than 2017 for much of this past year.

While thinking about numbers and attendance, it's good to think about age distribution of members and those attending. The numbers are hard to gauge because some people attend the Worship Gathering but we don't have data on their age or attendance patterns. However, using the fairest data we have, here's a comparison of our age distribution:

<u>2018</u>		<u>2016</u>	
80+	3%	80+	3%
70s	8%	70s	10%
60s	11%	60s	11%
50s	10%	50s	10%
40s	13%	40s	12%
30s	10%	30s	13%
20s	7%	20s	4%
Teens	10%	Teens	10%
5 to 12	21%	5 to 12	20%
0 to 4	7%	0 to 4	7%

We recorded record numbers this past year at Vacation Bible School and Fall Fest, plus our teenagers took full advantage of the extra space in the newer and bigger Falls Creek cabin we rented. For VBS, we had 475 people on campus, including 332 kids; and from these kids, 27 families were guests who listed no church affiliation. For Fall Fest, we had 432 kids registered and of these, 276 were not part of Emmaus.

Let me say two more quick things about money and ministry before we look at where we are now and where we're going.

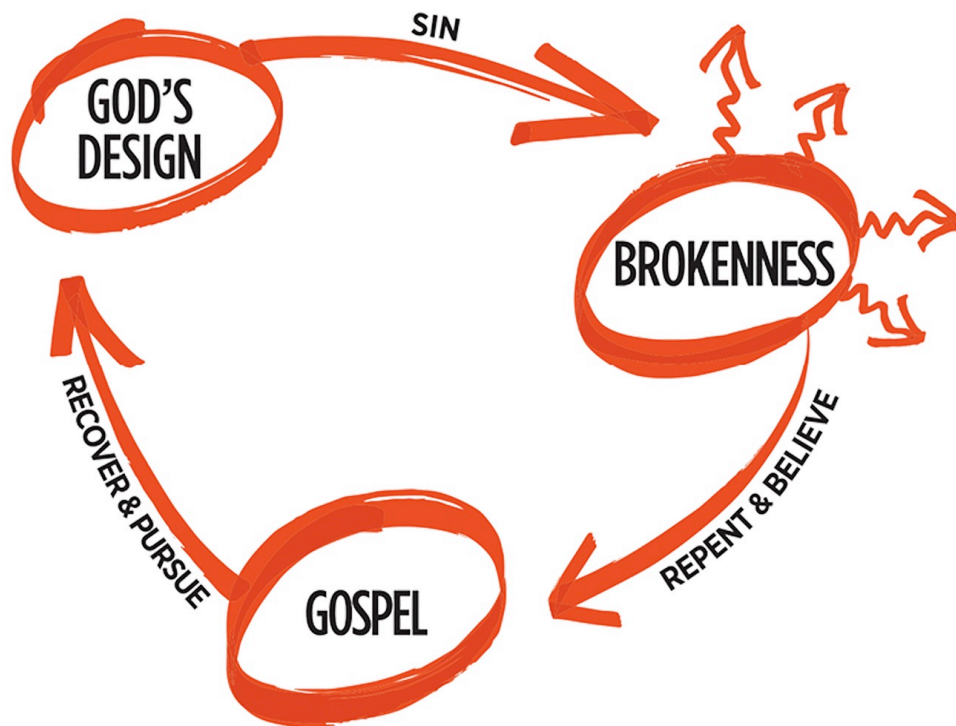
First, I've mentioned a couple of times about people leaving our church this past year. I want to be clear there is no bitterness; frustration and confusion, yes; bitterness, no. We love those people and they remain partners in the Gospel; but we won't be driven as a church by how many Christians stay at or leave our local fellowship. We are driven to grow by making disciples - both in the EXTERNAL GROWTH of seeing people come to faith in Christ and through the INTERNAL GROWTH of seeing these new disciples mature in faith so they immediately begin to proclaim and display Jesus to others. Let me say it this way: As a church, Emmaus will not be defined by the number of Christians who leave one church to attend another; we will be defined by the number of disciples who are baptized in the name of Jesus and in turn begin to disciple others.

Second, as we consider finances - and I remember those moments of doubt about how people leaving would impact our church's financial situation - we had a defining conversation among the staff. We determined not to back away from ministry, but instead to operate in reverent fear of God and to continue ahead by faith. Money will either make you fear man or fear God. And I truly believe the decision to not change course as a church but to continue ahead in faith and obedience is one of the reasons we have had such an exciting and rewarding year of ministry and missions.

Where We are Now

As a church, we want to help people know a few core statements. First, we want to rally around a core verse - 2 Corinthians 4:5 - "What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." From that verse, our mission is that 'We exist to Proclaim and Display Jesus'. Proclaim is what we do with our words and display is what we do with our actions. Everything we say and do—every word and every action—should be about pointing people to Jesus.

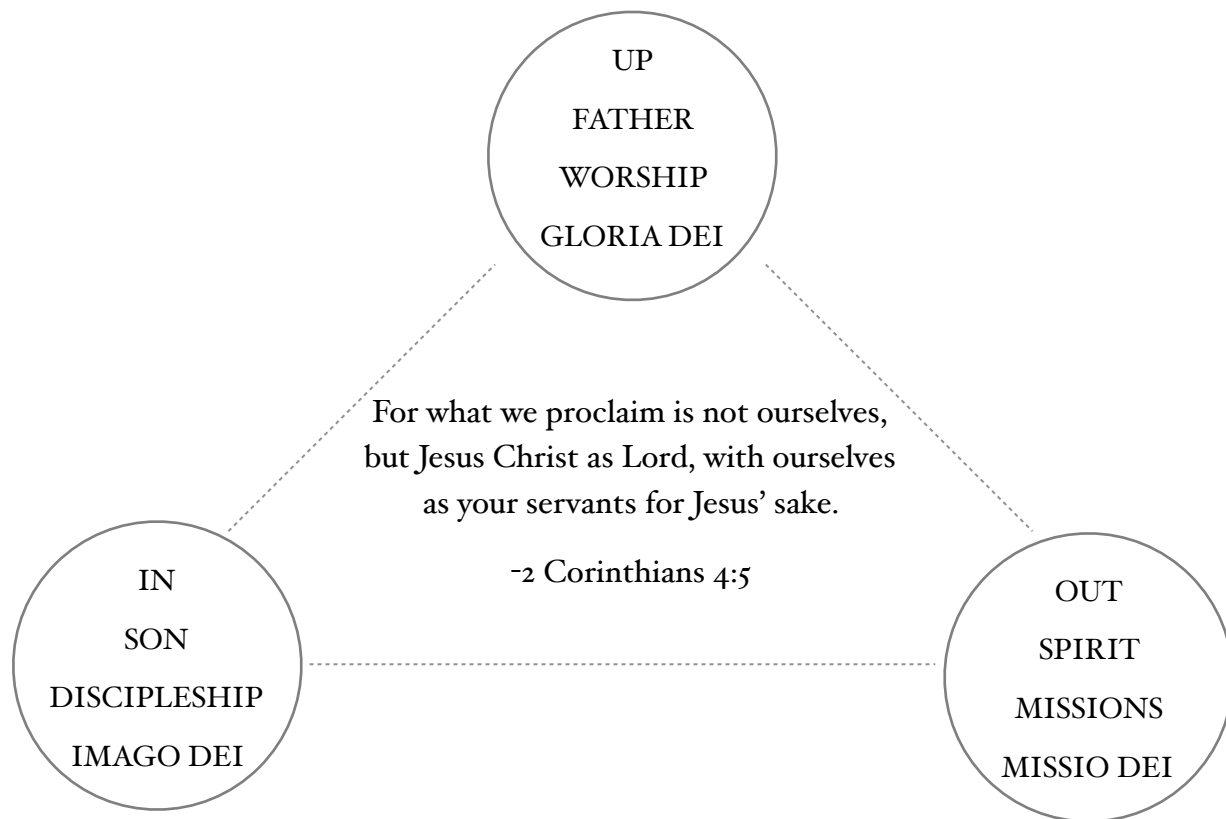
And we explain the hope and victory of Jesus using the 3 Circles model.



God designed the world perfectly and He created people in His image to live in His world for His glory. People rebelled against God; and this sin led to death and brokenness for people and for the whole world. Each of us have sinned against God; and in our rebellion, we face brokenness, death, and eternal separation from God. Yet, God in His love and grace sent His Son Jesus to destroy sin and death. This is the Gospel - the Good News - that Jesus came as the Messiah, the Rescuer planned and sent by God, not only to save God's people from sin and death but also to give full and abundant life in God's world. And we don't earn this new life. In fact, any effort to escape sin or brokenness on our own leads further from God. Instead, we must repent and believe in Jesus. And when we do, God not only saves us from sin and eternal death, but also empowers us to recover and pursue His design for our life and for His world.

There are many ways to share the Gospel, but we teach the 3 Circles because it presents the Gospel simply for kids and adults, it can be used to summarize the whole Bible, and it gives a picture of the on-going work of holiness as we follow Jesus.

Following the 3 Circles model of the Gospel, we also want every member to know the 3 Circles model of God and His Church.



Any attempt to model the Character of God as Trinity will fall short, so we present this image carefully. We're simply trying to show how the Character of God - One God, Eternally and Perfectly Existing in Three Persons - reflects His desire for His people.

We live UP in passionate worship for God's glory. We live IN through transformative discipleship to shaped into the image of God. And we live OUT through evangelistic missions according to the mission of God. And this living OUT is meant to happen in NEIGHBORHOODS and NATIONS. It happens with our NEIGHBORS based on where we LIVE, LEARN, WORK, and PLAY. And it happens in the NATIONS, both when we travel to another location and when God brings the nations to our neighborhoods. These prepositions - UP, IN, OUT - aren't just something we say. We want them to represent the mission of our church and what it means to be a member at Emmaus.

These are basic concepts that we try to use repeatedly across the generations of our church; not because we think the words themselves are special, but simply because we believe shared language creates culture. As we share these statements, they will help us make disciples and grow stronger as a church family.

So, how are we doing in these areas, and how can we improve?

Looking UP

Let's start with looking up. First off, we know worship is more than what happens on Sunday mornings at 10:30am. We want Sunday morning to be an overflow of what is happening in our lives throughout the week, as we look up to God in prayer and praise. But when the week has been difficult or we have wandered away from the Lord, the worship gathering is a powerful way to pull our attention and affections back toward God.

For prayer, we not only want to be intentional about more corporate prayer, we want prayer to fill our homes throughout the week and the hallways of our building on Sunday mornings. A strategic way we pursue prayer as a church is through the Prayer Room Ministry and the Home-Based Prayer Ministry via email. If you're interested in getting connected with either of these, please let me know.

For music, we are reminded of the power of music not only to focus us on God, but also to connect and unify us as a church. We continually choose to set aside preferences and simply sing with passion and authenticity to our God and to one another (Colossians 3). As we think about music leadership, I don't have any major updates, other than to point you back to what I said last year and the year before. And to let you know that our pastors continue to pray and discuss, seeking God's direction for our church. And in the middle of all this, we have the incredible gift of David's leadership, talent, humility, and spiritual maturity.

For preaching, we are committing ourselves to the Book of Matthew for the next year. I hope the process of working carefully and purposefully through a book will be good for our church and will help us grow in Bible study and discipleship. During 2018, I preached 43 out of 52 Sunday mornings. I hope to stay in that 80% range, because it lets our church hear from a variety of voices and we want to do a good job raising up other preachers. I'll continue to preach a series on Wednesday nights in the early Fall and early Spring, then use other weeks to raise up more preachers and utilize guests. I have a lot of room to grow as a preacher, and I work hard every week to improve for the Glory of God and the good of our church.

Looking IN

When it comes to IN, our staff had an important discussion a few weeks ago. In one of our weekly staff meetings, we were analyzing how well our church connected with guests and how we could best assimilate people into the life of our church. The answer is very simple and very important - the answer is relationships. People might attend a church for any number of reasons, but they stay because of relationships. If a person joins a group, there's over an 80% chance they'll still be in church after 5 years. If they don't join a group, that percentage falls to under 15%. How can we address this?

First, we need to see groups - especially Sunday School - as a starting point, not an end game. In other words, the main purpose is not to have someone attend a Sunday School class. The hope is that by attending a class or group, the person will build relationships and spiritual practices that extend beyond Sunday morning.

Second, we have discovered over and over that people feel connected at church when they serve. Craig Groeschel, the Pastor at Life.Church, says this well when he says, "People want to be KNOWN AND NEEDED." And the earlier they serve in their time at a church, the more likely they'll feel invested and the more people they'll get to know. This is one downside to having only one worship service and one Sunday School hour - there are less opportunities for people to serve and therefore it's more likely that someone could sit and watch, instead of participate.

How can you help? Since we're on a roll with pithy phrases, here's another one we'll begin to introduce at Emmaus: INVITE, INCLUDE, INVEST, INSPIRE. Invite someone to serve with you, include them in what you're doing, invest in their life in meaningful ways, and inspire them to do the same for others. INVITE, INCLUDE, INVEST, INSPIRE

This means, if you have a place to serve at Emmaus, make it your goal in 2019 to replace yourself. If you know how to do something, teach someone else. If you stand in a particular place, find someone to stand with you. And no, we can't make an announcement from the stage about this. Stage announcements have limited value. What's effective is one person saying to another, "Hey, would you do this with me?"

Here's one more thing about IN - as we think about helping people connect at Emmaus, one downside to our Worship Center is the number of seats versus the number of people attending. It's possible for a guest to visit and sit 5 or 6 seats from the nearest person. My challenge for you is to become the caregiver for your area of the worship center. In fact, we're in the process of appointing key leaders to oversee various sections of the seating. We need you to make it impossible for someone to visit and not be cared for. As Baptists, we're creatures of habit; most of you sit in the same seats each week - especially those of you that sit in the stadium seating! Instead of seeing that as a bad thing, we're asking you to make the most of it. If someone is a guest and you get their name, text it immediately to one of the staff. If you don't see a regular attender for a few weeks in your area, reach out to that person. They might be feeling radical and decided to sit in another area, or they might've had something happen and you're the person God has positioned to keep them from falling through the cracks. Take ownership of your area; help people connect; and keep the staff in the loop.

Looking OUT

What about looking OUT - sharing the Gospel with our neighbors and all nations? The previous discussion about connecting with guests impacts this topic because we always need more people to look OUT on Sunday morning. Most people walk toward the building and go inside. But to care for guests and regular attenders, our church needs a lot of people who arrive early to stand outside and look toward the parking lot or stand inside the building and look outward toward the entry doors. *A church with people looking outward on Sunday morning will usually be a church that looks outward throughout the week. I thank God for our Welcome Lead Team, and we're trying hard to get better at this all the time. But here's the deal - if you're a member of Emmaus, you're a member of the Welcome Team. We're all in this together.

Back in August, we took a survey to better understand our church. Of Emmaus members over the age of 18, 76% have been a Christian more than 20 years, 22% have been a Christian for 5-20 years, and 2% have been a Christian less than 5 years. Of these Members, 83% were baptized at another church and transferred to Emmaus; so only 17% of our Members were baptized at Emmaus. These numbers mean we must re-commit to being a church that reaches out to those far from God.

How do we get better at this? For starters, we can't see OUT disconnected from UP and IN. We don't get to pick one of the three. Instead, they are inter-connected. UP and IN are driving factors for OUT. As we grow in love for God - as we worship, pray, and are broken over the sin and darkness of the world - and as we grow in faith through Scripture and the Church, we will share the Gospel with those around us.

We also have two guys on staff who are leading the way to help us focus on OUT.

Carl Dean recently started working with our staff part-time to care for older adults and also help us think intentionally about evangelism. I truly believe God will use Carl as a catalyst for our church to make evangelism a core part of who we are.

In addition to Carl's help, Jim is working on multiple projects to keep our church focused OUT toward our neighborhoods and the nations. These projects may require us to go to some hard places and may require us to make some big sacrifices; but if there's anything we should be excited about as a church, it's making big sacrifices to go to hard places in order to share the Good News of Jesus.

In addition to what we mentioned above, what can you do right now to live OUT?

First, don't miss the impact of hospitality and the value of making evangelism a part of what you're already doing. One thing Carl has reminded me is we don't need a bunch of additional programs for evangelism; we primarily need to make evangelism part of the events and ministries we're already doing. You probably don't have time to add multiple things to your personal schedule. However, we can all learn to make the most of every opportunity where we LIVE, LEARN, WORK, and PLAY.

Second, if possible, try to participate in a local or global mission trip. There's something about participating in a trip or project that helps us see the rest of life in a new light. If you're interested in these mission trips or ministry projects, reach out to Jim.

Looking Ahead

So tomorrow Emmaus Baptist Church "turns" 32 years old. What are some plans for the future? What's coming next?

I want to give you 3 facility plans, then a couple of closing themes, as we wrap up.

First, early next year the front wall will come off the old library space in the Worship Center lobby, so we can use that space for a Missions Mobilization and Resource Center. At the same time, we will update the coffee bar area to help people connect with our church through groups and service opportunities. And in the process, we're hoping to update the entire lobby to better connect with guests, especially younger guests.

Second, we're working on some outside plans, specifically for the area between the two main buildings and the west property. For the area between the two buildings, not only will we consider a way to protect against rain, but the goal is for this space to become a core meeting place for fellowship and interaction. For the back, west property, the timeframe may be a bit longer, but we still hope to develop a very nice pavilion for groups and family parties, along with kid sports fields and possibly a walking trail or other places to fellowship and hang out. This has proven to be a big project, but development of that west property could open huge doors to minister to our neighborhoods and community.

Third, when it comes to facilities, let me address possible new buildings. Selfishly, I'd love to build a new kid and family building - and we want to position ourselves for that at some point; but right now, our main goal is optimize the facilities we currently have, because we have a lot of square footage in relation to the number of people attending. As we work on outside projects, we're keeping in mind the long-term development of buildings so as not to cut ourselves off from future growth. Be patient with us; and know we're working on ideas, because when the time to act is right, we want to be ready.

I want to end tonight with two key words for any church, but especially for Emmaus in 2019. These words are Flexibility and Multiply. These themes should be front and center for any church looking to the future.

The #1 rule for any mission trip is FLEXIBILITY. The same applies for local church life, because we're on a mission trip together, right where God has placed us. We won't be flexible about the Gospel, and we won't be flexible about our overall mission, and we won't be flexible about the need for the Holy Spirit's power. But we will be flexible about almost everything else. Especially for some of the local and global initiatives Jim is pursuing, we need to be ready as a church to move when opportunities open. And we'll need to be flexible about how we do ministry - when we meet, how often we meet, where we meet. If you like Emmaus because of the schedule or style or programs, I can't promise you those will stay the same. But if you are part of this church family because you want to make an impact for God's glory and God's Kingdom, we are going to pursue that together with everything we have.

The second key word is MULTIPLY. This is a good word for 2019, because we're a key partner church with Multiply Church in Calgary, Canada that launched a couple of years ago. At Emmaus, we need to think constantly about what it means to Multiply.

If we're going to focus OUT, we won't try to protect our comforts, or group, or resources. We'll try to multiply what we have so we can reach more people with the Gospel.

This means, we may multiply the number of worship services even before seating capacity demands a change. This means, we may need to send out some of our best people and best resources to other locations to multiply the church. This means, we need every group - every Sunday School class - to think about multiplying into additional groups, not just on Sunday morning, but in creative, out-of-the-box ways. Nobody wants to have their group split up arbitrarily; that rarely goes well and we don't want to do that. Instead, we want to create a culture in which groups are constantly thinking how they can plant new groups - how they can reach more people and multiply their impact.

Multiplication means we need to raise up more leaders, and this begins with ingraining service and leadership into our kids and students. Multiplication means, I'm not just concerned about my family, I'm concerned about my neighborhood. And I'm not just concerned about our church, I'm concerned about our city. And I'm not just concerned about our country, I'm concerned about every tribe, tongue, people, and nation coming to know and worship our Great God.

So, we will lay down our preferences, we will lay down our pride, and we will give ourselves away to make disciples of all nations. We will do this with prayer and fasting, with worship and sacrifice, with joy and hope.

"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." (Ephesians 3:20-21)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Owen Nease". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and email address.

Dr. Owen Nease
owen@emmausokc.org

Summary Statements / Action Steps from 2018 State of the Church Address

Mission Statement: Summary Statements/Phrases

“We exist to Proclaim and Display Jesus”

Proclaim = Words / Display = Actions / Jesus (not Emmaus) = Our Main Focus

Mission Statement: Action Steps

1. Memorize 2 Corinthians 4:5 - *“What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”*

2. Could I walk someone through the Mission Statement and the UP / IN / OUT model?

UP: Summary Statements/Phrases

Worship at 10:30am on Sunday is an *Overflow* of Worship throughout the Week

Worship at 10:30am on Sunday can *Re-Focus our Attention and Affections* toward God

UP: Action Steps

1. Could I walk someone through the 3 Circles model for sharing the Gospel?
2. On Sunday mornings, I will...
 1. Sing and Participate in a way that Builds Unity and Encourages those around me
 2. Pray with others and ask about their Spiritual Growth

IN: Summary Statements/Phrases

Invite, Include, Invest, Inspire

IN: Action Steps

1. Join/Create a Small Group and Find a place to Serve
2. Invite someone else to Serve with me
3. Take Responsibility for those who sit in my area of the Worship Center

OUT: Summary Statements/Phrases

Neighborhoods and Nations

Live, Learn, Work, Play

OUT: Action Steps

1. Who can I connect with in my neighborhood through Hospitality in order to proclaim and display Jesus?
2. What opportunities exist for me to go on a Mission Trip or participate in a Ministry Project through my Sunday School or a church-wide effort?

Concluding Themes

FLEXIBILITY and MULTIPLY