

the  
gathering

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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**GATHERING IDENTITY**

*Who Are We?*

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus made it clear why the church exists: The church exists to “go and make disciples...” That is our mandate. That is why we exist. That is Jesus’ call to His church. Therefore, at The Gathering, everything we do as a church must be about *discipleship* and making more and better *disciples* (i.e. *followers* or *apprentices* of Jesus). This document seeks to explain how we desire to do that.



**Our MISSION**

*Why We Exist*

*We Exist to Connect People to the Love of Jesus! (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)*

We believe that God’s love is irresistible and that as we become more and more convinced of God’s love for us, that we will surrender more and more of our lives to Him. Knowing, experiencing, and sharing the love of Jesus is what discipleship is all about.



**Our VISION for Discipleship**

*Who We Want to Become*

*We exist to connect people to the love of Jesus...so that they would follow Jesus! (Matthew 28:18-20)*

We follow Jesus by:

- *Being With Jesus* (John 15:4)
- *Becoming Like Jesus* (Romans 12:1-2)
- *Doing What Jesus Said* (John 14:15)



**MARKS of Discipleship**

*What Commitment to the Vision Looks Like*

**Three marks of a disciple who is committed to “*Being With Jesus*”:**

- Hunger and passion for Jesus (Matthew 22:37)
- Learning to hear God’s voice through prayer & Scripture (John 10:27)
- Knowing and increasingly living out of their identity in Christ (Ephesians 1-2)

**Three marks of a disciple who is committed to "Becoming Like Jesus":**

- Increasing desire and commitment to being led by and filled with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18)
- Actively inviting the Holy Spirit to transform their character and to heal their heart (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Leaning in to authentic community and spiritual friendship (James 5:16)

**Three marks of a disciple who is committed to "Doing What Jesus Said":**

- Increasingly 'agrees with Jesus' and commits to obeying His teaching (John 14:23)
- Actively pursues opportunities to share the Gospel and to make more disciples (1 Peter 3:15)
- Actively cares for 'the least of these'; the poor, needy, and oppressed (Matthew 25:31-46)



**CULTURAL VALUES**

*What's Important to Us*

**1. We Value the Bible**

We want everything we teach and do to be shaped by the Bible. We believe that all Scripture points to Jesus (John 5:39) and that it's impossible to truly know Jesus without knowing the Bible. It is the inspired word of God and it helps us to become more and more like Christ (2 Timothy 3:16).

*We want to be a people of the book!*

**2. We Value 24/7 Worship**

We want the songs that we sing on Sundays to passionately and honestly reflect our love for Christ. At the same time, we know that worship is so much more than the songs that we sing one day a week. In fact, worship is a *lifestyle* and can be experienced in everything that we think, say, and do every single day of the week (Romans 12:1-2).

*We want to be a people who worship Christ in everything!*

**3. We Value Prayer**

We believe that there are things that God wants to do in our world that He will not do unless His people pray. Prayer changes things (Matthew 7:7)! Church strategy, leadership and plans are all important but ultimately it is prayer that makes room for the Holy Spirit to work.

*We want to be a praying church!*

#### **4. We Value People**

Because we believe that people are God's most prized possession and that He loves everybody (no matter what), we are committed to being as welcoming and as loving a church community as we can possibly be. Everybody needs a church family. So, whatever your story - there's a place for you around our table.

*We want to be a loving church!*

#### **5. We Value Mission**

We don't attend church; *we are the church!* And as the church, we are called to live as sent people in our everyday lives; sharing the love of Christ with our friends, neighbours, coworkers, and the poor and marginalized. The mission of God is to drive everything that we do in life (Matthew 28:18-20, Galatians 5:6). The church does not exist for itself, but for our hurting world.

*We want to be a people who live on mission!*

#### **6. We Value Engagement**

While some may treat church as a product to be *consumed*, we strive to be a church that encourages everyone to *contribute*. We believe that the church is not being the church unless everyone is playing their part (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). It takes everyone's time, talents and treasures to accomplish everything that God has called us to accomplish.

*We want to be a church of contributors!*

#### **7. We Value Authenticity**

In a world where people often hide behind their masks and pretend to be something they are not, we want to be a people who are taking our masks off and becoming more and more honest with God and with one another. We believe that 'authenticity' is a great indicator of spiritual growth and maturity (James 5:16), and so we long to be real and honest in everything that we do and say (both from the stage on Sundays as well as in our everyday lives!).

*We want to be an honest church!*

## 8. We Value Simplicity

We want to be a *simple church*; A church that focuses on relationships instead of programs. At the same time, we want everything we do to be done with excellence. This requires a laser focus and a commitment to doing only a few things but doing them well. As a people, this also requires that we avoid the pull to over-schedule our lives, allowing God the space He needs to grow our relationships.

*We want to be a focused church!*



### **Our THEOLOGY**

#### *What We Believe*

We believe in God as eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created and sustains the universe. The eternal purpose of God the Father is to create a people who will bring glory to God forever. God alone is worthy of worship.

We believe that God became human in Jesus Christ. Jesus came to restore the world because humans have rejected God in disobedience. Jesus taught and modelled the way of God's kingdom. He died on the cross, making it possible for us to accept a renewed relationship with God. He rose from the dead, broke the power of sin and death, and frees us to live in obedience to God's will.

We believe that God the Holy Spirit invites all people to be reconciled with God and to join the global family of faith. Believers confess their faith, are baptized, and join in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and guided by the Bible, members of the church seek to live as followers of Christ and invite others to experience this new life.

As Christians, we look forward to the day when God will once again send Jesus to bring all things under God's eternal rule.

**OUR LEADERSHIP & MEMBERSHIP**

**OUR STAFF:**

Jeff Jantzi – Lead Pastor  
Rachel McGregor– Church Administrator  
Dan Chook Reid – Church Planter, Bytown Community Church

**OUR ELDERS:**

Colin Miller – Board Chair  
Michael Kirkwood – Treasurer (*Term expires in 2024*)  
Rebecca Bussey (*Term expires in 2024*)  
Moti Nano  
Craig Cudmore  
Jason Pierosara

**OUR MEMBERS:**

As of March 2024 we have 40 active members at The Gathering:

Matthew Alle	Noah Grossman	Moti Nano
Sarah Alle	Rob Jackson	Liam Peyton
Braden Bailey	Amy Jansen	Susan Peyton
Paul Bussey	Jeff Jantzi	Jason Pierosara
Rebecca Bussey	Kim Jantzi	Natalie Pierosara
Dan Chook Reid	Brenda Kirkwood	George Prytulak
Melody Chook Reid	Michael Kirkwood	Karen Prytulak
Craig Cudmore	Matthew Koop	Christa Ramsay
David Dobson	Melanie Koop	Angela Richardson
Lori Dobson	Linda MacMillan	Kevin Scott
Lara Dyer	Ted McGregor	Kristyn Scott
Jeremy Gamage	Nicole Meekin	Stewart Weatherbee
Mila Gamage	Colin Miller	Judilyn Weatherbee
Holly Grossman		

## **Letter from the Chair of the Board of Elders**

Prepared By Colin Miller

Dear Gathering Family,

It is truly a pleasure to participate in Christ's body with you. We hope that this finds you well and that you are basking in the knowledge of God's love for you.

2023 has been another year full of changes for our assembly. As we have emerged from the pandemic, things in our world have changed, but we are starting to regain the sense of normalcy for which most of us have longed. With this resumption of our regular routines, we have welcomed back many familiar faces and have also embraced the arrival of several new ones. As we look around the assembly on Sunday mornings, it is so encouraging to see less and less empty chairs and feel the sense of renewal as we enter the next phase of what God has in store for us.

Being a mobile church, we are volunteer led, so without you, we would not be able to fulfill our mission of connecting people to the love of Jesus. Accordingly, we would like to express a huge thank you to all who have shared your time, treasures, and talents to grow God's kingdom. It is so uplifting to see so many people stepping up to meet the needs of the church. There are so many examples that I will not begin to name them for fear of leaving someone out; however, please know that whatever the role you fill, it is important, and that your contribution does not go unnoticed, not by us, but most importantly, not by our Heavenly Father.

Certainly, one of the most important developments that came this past year, is the advancement of our anchor cause. As many are aware, through the course of community studies, prayer walks, meetings and more prayer, food insecurity was identified as a significant issue in our community. As a community of faith, The Gathering seeks to be God's hands and feet in our neighbourhood, so it was decided that we would endeavour to find a way to meet that need. Consequently, we have decided to open a food bank in the Ottawa South area, which will be called The Community Table. As I know that there is another, more substantive, update with respect to our anchor cause, I will not get into the details. However, we feel that it is important to recognize God's hand in this development. He has opened so many doors for us as this initiative has moved forward and we know that He will continue to go before us as we strive to demonstrate His love for all His children.

I do want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the Steering Committee, that has been spearheading this undertaking. Most of us are unaware of what is required to bring about a new entity: identifying a location, filing for incorporation, developing a missional framework, and the list goes on and on. The members of the Steering Committee have been and continue to meet regularly to ensure that this project advances. This has required a significant commitment of time and energy, for which we would like to acknowledge them.

### **BOARD TRANSITIONS**

I would like to take a moment to recognize that again, we are seeing some transition at the Board level. However, I want to assure you that this is normal, and it is actually a good thing for both the board members stepping down and the church as it provides an opportunity for them to recharge, while also allowing some new ideas and fresh perspectives to be shared.

This year saw the addition of two new members, Jason Pierosara and Moti Nano. They have been welcome additions and each of them has brought his unique gifts to the Board, Jason with his operational perspective and Moti with his inspiring faith.

As for departures, Rebecca Bussey will be stepping away at the end of March, as will Michael Kirkwood. It will come as no surprise to those that know her, Rebecca has a servant's heart and is always ready to jump in and tackle any problem. Her courageousness and selflessness will be missed, so I wanted to make sure to acknowledge Rebecca for her service over the past two years.

Also stepping away will be Michael Kirkwood. Michael is a true blessing to our church and has faithfully served on the Board of Elders for six years. In addition to being a member of the Board, he also fulfills the role of treasurer, as well as taking on the hosting duties from time to time on Sunday mornings. His knowledge of and experience in corporate matters has certainly been an asset to both the Board and The Gathering.

Thankfully, both they and their families are not going anywhere. You can be sure to find them continuing to serve in various areas at The Gathering.

In closing, I would like to reiterate our appreciation to everyone who calls The Gathering home and contributes to the life of our church. However, I want to specifically thank our staff, who work so hard to teach, lead and provide a structure in which we can serve Jesus. Jeff, Rachel, Kristyn and Dan; thank you so much for your efforts.

As we move forward in 2024, I am confident that God will continue to grow His kingdom in our community, and I am excited to see what He does. I look forward to sharing this journey with each of you, as we continue to share Christ's love.

Blessings,



Colin Miller  
Chair Elder Board

## **LEAD PASTOR REPORT**

Prepared by Jeff Jantzi

### **2023 IN REVIEW...**

After a few long COVID years, 2023 felt like a return to 'normal' for us as a church family (or at least, a 'new normal'). While the makeup of our church has changed significantly from what it was pre-COVID, with many new people starting to attend and others not returning, I am so grateful to know that *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* (Hebrews 13:8) and that *"The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."* (Isaiah 40:8). God is faithful amidst all the change and uncertainty, and he continues to build his church in and through us as his people.

As we look back at 2023 and all that God has done in building the work & ministry of "The Gathering", here a few highlights that come to mind:

### **SUNDAY MORNINGS**

I have been so encouraged by the number of new people we have been able to connect with on Sunday mornings. While our overall attendance numbers remained small throughout 2023 (80-100 people on any given Sunday), there were approximately 150-200 people that connected with us on a semi-regular basis (some watching our sermons online only.) We also had approximately 250 people in attendance on Christmas Eve! With church attendance trends continuing to shift post-COVID (where attending  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  the time = regular attendance in many people's minds), we can expect for this ratio of "Regular Attendees" to "Sunday morning attendance" to remain a reality. While I continue to pray that we would reach more & more people on Sunday mornings – especially those who are far from God – I am so grateful to God for those we do get to minister to on a regular or semi-regular basis (even if just a few times a year!).

Attendance numbers do not tell the whole story of a church's spiritual growth or maturity, however. I am grateful for the many mature believers God has led to our church this past year, as well as the ways that God has continued to grow and mature us as a church family as we've opened the Scriptures together each week.

We covered a lot of ground content-wise in 2023:

- In January, we kicked off the New Year with a series called "Follow" where we talked about orienting our lives around our three core values as a church: 'Being With Jesus', 'Becoming Like Jesus' and 'Doing What Jesus Said'.
- February through June, we continued in our journey through the book of Acts, looking at Acts 13-20 and Paul's missionary trips throughout Ancient Rome. In these chapters, we focused in on some of the main themes in the book: The Mission of God, the Power of the Holy Spirit, Persecution, God's Provision, and the Church's Perseverance. It was a rich time as we considered how it all applies to us today as a church family.
- Throughout the summer, our services moved outdoors (to the rear courtyard at St. FX High School). While outdoors, we worked through a series called "God Has a Name" where we looked at God's self-disclosure statement to Moses in Exodus 34:5-7. We also welcomed a

few guest speakers while I was on vacation in August.

- In September, we moved back indoors and looked at what it means to be God's people - the Church - in a series called "Life Together". We talked about our shared identity in Christ, walking in love as a community of faith, our shared message and mission as the church (including God's call on the church to care for the poor), and the invitation to worship God together as a church in gratitude and thanksgiving.
- October-November we wrapped our two-year-long journey through the book of Acts.
- During Advent in December, we prepared our hearts for Christmas by looking at some of the main characters in the Biblical Christmas story.

As we have worked through the Scriptures together, I have been so encouraged by the growing hunger for more of God's word that I have sensed amongst many in our church. Getting to know God through his written word is a key reason for why we gather in the first place, so let's keep leaning into God's word together in 2024!

I want to thank our worship leaders and band members who serve so faithfully, leading us into God's presence through song each week. It's not easy being a portable church and leading worship in a cavernous cafetorium, but Susan, Braden, and teams lead with humility, skill, and hearts chasing after God. Thank you so much to for all you do!

A huge thank you as well to our truck drivers and set up and tear down volunteers, along with our sound and coffee volunteers, who show up early and stay late each week to serve Jesus by serving His church in such practical and tangible ways. You truly are the 'unsung heroes' of our church - the people who make it possible for us to "Connect people to the love of Jesus" each week. We literally couldn't do it without you!

## **STAFFING CHANGE**

It was a sad day. On Sunday March 12, 2023, when our beloved church administrator Kristyn Scott suffered a concussion while setting up for the service which led to a lengthy leave of absence which continues today. We continue to pray for her full healing and recovery!

Truthfully, it was a bit stressful & chaotic for me in the months that followed. It's not ideal to be without a church administrator, that is for sure! Thankfully, many people stepped up in Kristyn's absence (special thanks to Crystal Wasney in particular), and we were able to hire Rachel McGregor to a part-time temporary role in May 2023.

By September, after Kristyn announced she would be off longer than originally anticipated, Rachel accepted the position of "Church Administrator" at the Gathering (working  $\frac{3}{4}$  time).

While I was very sad to see Kristyn go, I was relieved to see God's provision in Rachel (who had only been at our church for a short time leading up to Kristyn's injury). The transition has been seamless. Much thanks to God!

I do also want to give my special thanks to Kristyn for over 10 years on staff at The Gathering! WOW! That's a long time to put up with me. While you are not in this role anymore, I'm so glad to that you and Kevin (and the kids) are still part of our church family.

## HOME CHURCH

In 2023 we had 6 different Home Churches meeting to “connect and grow” together. Truthfully, it’s been a bit of a challenge getting Home Churches back up and running after COVID, but I am grateful for each of these groups and their leaders. They are the backbone of our church! Home Church is where people experience community and grow most deeply in our church. It is my hope and prayer that we would see our groups strengthened in 2024!

A special thanks to our Home Church Leaders: Susan Peyton, Rachel & Ted McGregor, Kevin & Kristyn Scott, Lara Dyer, Jeremy & Mila Gamage, Craig & Linda Cudmore, Christa Ramsay and others.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

This year, we were able to host several community outreach events. Here are some of the highlights:

- **The Big Give (June 3)** – It was a great evening as we were able to serve over 1000 of our neighbours. We had free bouncy castles, popcorn, cotton candy and a movie under the stars. This was a great bridge-building event for our church. Thank you to all who volunteered and helped to make it happen!
- **Vacation Bible Camp** – We had approximately 50 children participate in our second ever in-person Vacation Bible Camp at Parkway Church! This was a great way for us to make some new connections with families. Thank you to the Prytulak family and our many volunteers who helped to pull this off!
- **Movie in the Park (Sept 15)** – We had an amazing evening at Mountain Meadows Park with over 1500 neighbours coming out. What a blessing to be able to put on such a fun evening for our neighbourhood while letting them know we exist and want to be present!
- **Ottawa Compassion Collective** – Together we were able to contribute significant dollars to the work of Compassion in Guatemala! We also hosted a Compassion Sunday in December and saw 7 children from Guatemala sponsored. Together, along with the others in the Collective, we are now sponsoring over 300 children in Guatemala together. Praise God! Thanks for sponsoring kids and for giving over-and-above to this amazing ministry.
- **Christmas Events in Riverside South** – It was a joy to be able to have a float in the Riverside South Christmas Parade in November, as well as have Susan sing Christmas carols/songs at the Riverside South Community Associations sleigh ride event in December.
- **Christmas Eve** – This Christmas we saw around 250 people in attendance for our Christmas Eve Service, many of them being guests to The Gathering. We also had several others watch online after-the-fact. Thanks be to God for the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with so many this Christmas!

## **ANCHOR CAUSE**

Of all the things going on in our church in 2023, one of the most exciting things is the development of our Anchor Cause Ministry. After much discussion, prayer & discernment as a leadership team along with the congregation, we announced (in September 2023) our intention to move towards the launch of a food bank ("The Community Table") in Riverside South.

You can read more about this in Brenda Kirkwood's Anchor Cause Report on page 22.

A Special thanks to our Anchor Cause committee: Brenda Kirkwood, Dean Giesbrecht, Ted McGregor, Kim Jantzi and Craig & Linda Cudmore (Craig & Linda helped provide leadership to this group – no easy task!).

## **KIDS MINISTRY**

One of the highlights each and every Sunday is to see all the young kids in our congregation. For a small church, we have A LOT of kids with as many as 20-40 leaving for Kids Church each week. Amazing!

Special thanks to Mrs P (Karen Prytulak) and all our amazing Kids Ministry Teachers and Volunteers for helping to make it happen. Karen in particular continues to provide such amazing leadership and invests a ton of time in our kids each week. So, a huge thanks to you Karen!

Check out Mrs P's Kids Ministry report on page 20.

## **YOUTH MINISTRY**

One exciting development on Sunday mornings has been the growth of our Junior High Ministry. With leaders like Jeff Scott, Amy Jansen, and Ted McGregor stepping in to teach our youth and a team of helpers supporting them – our Sunday Morning Youth Ministry has taken off. Using the "Orange" Curriculum, our kids are being disciplined well. So, a huge thanks to all our Sunday Morning Youth Leaders!

We've also continued to lean into our youth ministry partnership with Parkway Church in Greely on Thursday nights and are grateful for the leadership that Nate, Jordan, Matt and others provided throughout 2023.

For more on that, you can check out Matthew Wiebe's Youth Ministry report on page 21.

## **BAPTISM**

It was such a joy to be able to baptize Laurie Simmons in June! We'd hoped to see more take this step in a December Baptismal Service, but we had to postpone it as those who were considering baptism did not feel ready to take this step. Please pray that God would move in people's hearts and give them the courage to take this vital step in 2024!

## **ELDERS**

I am so grateful for the support of a great board of Elders. I sometimes hear from pastor friends about their dysfunctional or unsupportive boards but am so thankful that this is not case at The Gathering! Our board is very supportive and I am beyond thankful for them.

Make sure to check out our board chair, Colin Miller's report on page 8 to get a sense of some of the things we worked together in 2023.

On that note, I do want to thank Michael (term expiring) and Rebecca (term expiring) for all their time and effort as they served on our Elder Board. You both brought invaluable perspective and I am so grateful for your voice and leadership around our table. Well done, good and faithful servants!

## **SUMMER STUDENT**

We were thrilled to have Steven Prytulak on staff as our summer student for the summer of 2023! He worked with Mrs P to lead our Vacation Bible Camp, volunteered with our Youth Ministry, helped out on Sundays, and supported Rachel with various administrative tasks. Steven continues to serve our church in various volunteer roles including editing and posting our sermon videos and podcast each week. Thank you, Steven, for all your hard work!

## **FINANCES**

You can see a full report starting on page 23, but I am so grateful for God's provision in 2023. After a challenging couple of years, it was so encouraging to see an increase in giving this past year. God continues to provide all that we need through YOUR generosity. Thank you so much for being faithful with your finances and for believing in the ministry of our church!

Special thanks to Michael Kirkwood, our Treasurer (and an Elder), for his tireless work in this area. Thanks too to Ethan Bussey who has been helping us with some of the bookkeeping duties.

## **BYTOWN COMMUNITY CHURCH**

I continue to be very excited for Dan & Mel Chook-Reid and the work that God is doing through their church plant, "Bytown Community Church". Planting a church is very hard, and planting a church virtually during COVID is even harder. But God is faithful, and He is building a great church community in the Downtown core of Ottawa. I am so glad that we at The Gathering get to be a part of it! Brenda Kirkwood and I both sit on Dan's Task Force, and our board continues to provide oversight to Dan's work.

See Dan's report for more information on page 18.

**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024...**

Here are a few things that I'm excited about in the year ahead:

**THE COMMUNITY TABLE**

One of the things I am most excited about for this year is the launch of our Food Bank Ministry called "The Community Table" in Riverside South.

We've called it "The Community Table" because it speaks to what we sense God is calling us to be & do through this ministry. The language of 'community' speaks to this being a broader community initiative, not just The Gathering's initiative. It also speaks to the relational nature of the work we will be engaging in, as does the language of 'Table'. We desire to get to know and care for our neighbours in need in practical ways while also pointing them to Jesus and what he's done for them. 'Table' also speaks to the 'food' aspect of the ministry as we will aim to distribute essential grocery items to families and individuals in need. It is also a word that speaks to the spiritual nature of our work, whereas we build relationships with our neighbours in need, we will be very intentional to invite them to 'the table' that Jesus has set for them so that they can experience the spiritual nourishment that he provides for their soul.

Here is a breakdown of "The Community Table's" Mission, Vision & Values that our Anchor Cause Committee has put together and that our Board of Elders has approved:

**Mission (Why do we exist?)**

Our mission is to connect neighbours in need to the love of Jesus by providing opportunities for relational connection and receiving essential grocery items. (Matt. 25:37-40, Matt.28:18-20)

**Vision (What do we want to see happen?)**

We envision a community where food insecurity is being addressed with compassion, and our neighbours in need are cared for in the love of Christ. (Lk 14:12-14, Jas. 1:27)

**Values (What are our core/guiding principles?)**

- ***Christ-Centered Compassion:*** We believe in the life-changing message of Jesus and are motivated by his example to extend compassion to those in need (Matt. 9:36, Matt. 25:37-40). Our actions are guided by love for God and love for our neighbour (Matt. 22:37-40), serving all who come to The Community Table, regardless of background, beliefs, or circumstances (Lk. 10:30-37).
- ***Dignity and Respect:*** We believe that everyone is created in the image of God and is worthy of dignity and respect (Gen. 1:27). Therefore, we will uphold the inherent worth and value of every individual, extending the same grace that God in Christ Jesus has extended to us (Matt. 7:12, Matt. 10:8). We desire to care for the whole

person (mind, body, and soul), honouring each individual's humanity and uniqueness (Col. 1:28, Rom. 12:10).

You will be hearing much more about "The Community Table" in the coming months, including at our AGM. But for now, make sure to check out Brenda' Kirkwood's report on page 24 for more information. I'm excited to see where God leads us in this adventure throughout 2024! We hope to begin serving our community starting sometime this Spring.

## HOME CHURCH

Home Church is an area that we need to grow in as a church this year. Since COVID, it has been a challenge to get people reconnected in this way. While I am grateful for the 6 groups we currently have, I'd love to see that number increase. Ideally, we would see no less than 50-60% of our church connected in a group. We are currently at approximately 1/3 and would love to see that number increase. Please join me in praying that God would raise up leaders who can host and disciple our people well!

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

We will be continuing to work through the New Testament Letter of Romans throughout the Spring of 2024. We'll then take a break for the summer and move back outdoors. I am currently praying about what book of the Bible to work through next as a church family. I would welcome any ideas!

I continue to desire to see our church grow in our engagement in worship through song on Sunday mornings. Please pray that God would move amongst us as we gather and that we'd respond with hearts full of praise, wonder and surrender to Him!

## OUTREACH

Throughout 2024, we will continue to look for opportunities to love our neighbours and to serve others with the good news of Jesus.

This will include things like:

- **The Community Table** – See comments above as well as the Anchor Cause report.
- **Vacation Bible Camp** – We are planning on hosting another VBC at Parkway this summer! Mrs P will once again be leading, and we will be looking for volunteers!
- **The Big Give and other events** – We are planning to host "The Big Give" in June and a "Movie in the Park" in September once again this year. It's a great way for us to connect with our community and to love our neighbours in practical ways.
- Blessing **Partner Ministries** like OIM, Jericho Road, Compassion Canada, First Place Options, Multiply and various church plants with whom we partner. We long to be able to financially bless other ministries at the end of the year!
- **Other?** We want to remain as agile and flexible as we can, ready to respond to needs as

God presents them to us!

## SUMMER STUDENT

We will be looking to hire a summer student for the months of June & July. Keep an eye open for a posting soon!

## ELDERS

At the time of writing this report (late Feb 2024), I am hopeful that we will be able to add one or two new Elders to our board at our AGM. With Michael & Rebecca stepping off, we are praying God provides some solid leaders to our team this year!

## ONMB

I am grateful to be engaged in a great denomination: The Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches ([www.onmb.org](http://www.onmb.org)). As a local church, we remain committed to being as involved in our denomination as we can be. Noah Grossman continues to serve as a director on the ONMB Board, and I have recently joined the Nominating Team. Others (like Brenda Kirkwood) are involved in other areas as well.

Recently, the ONMB hired Trevor Seath as their new Executive Director (<https://onmb.org/onmb-new-executive-director>). We're very excited for what God has in store for our ONMB family.

## CLOSING COMMENTS

There is much more I could say – but this report has gone on long enough! If you are still reading, thanks for making it to the end 😊.

Once again, I want to thank every one of you for all the ways that you have served our Church Family in this season. Thank you for giving of your time, talents, and treasures in order to see our Church be more and more effective in “connecting people to the love of Jesus.”

Thank you too to Kristyn, Rachel, and Dan, who have served our church so faithfully. We miss you in this role Kristyn but are grateful for God's provision in Rachel who is doing a great job. Thanks for all you do.

On a personal note, this August will mark 10 years since I first came to The Gathering as it's pastor. I can truly say that it has been a joy being the pastor at The Gathering during this time. I hope & pray that God will allow me to serve for at least another 10 years! 😊

Grateful,



Pastor Jeff Jantzi

## **Church Planter Report**

Prepared by Dan Chook Reid

2023 started off as an exciting year for our ministry. Our church was growing, we had new people involved and there was a lot of energy in the community.

However, our community was faced with shocking and disorienting news as one of our new community members was tragically killed in a car accident in March. She was only in her twenties.

This difficult event caused many of our community members to face grief head on. As is common in these circumstances, tears were shed not only for the loss of our community member but also over other wounds from past experiences of grief and loss.

Grief has continued to be a theme over this past year. Even though our congregation is young we are walking with several people who are caring for sick parents. These experiences have deepened our sense of community, people's resilience, and faith. Though it has not been easy I see the many ways in which God is using this pain to "grow us up" spiritually. I have been praying for deeper spiritual maturity within our church, although this is not the path I would have chosen, I see God's goodness all around.

Throughout these difficulties, there has still been joy. Engagements, weddings, and pregnancies were common themes throughout the year as well. It is beautiful how in the midst of pain there continues to be promises of new life.

Over the summer Bytown had its second summer student, Mary. She worked for the church after graduating from University of Ottawa and while raising funds to work for InterVarsity. She did a fantastic job. She led our community while I was on vacation and throughout July and August.

In the summer we looked at women in the Bible, studying the book of Ruth on Wednesday evenings and looking at a different female protagonist each Sunday. We ended the series with conversations about why we encourage women to lead within our community. It was a fruitful and educational time. Our hope and prayer is that Bytown becomes a place where women of every age discover their giftings and unique calling and are supported to use those gifts within the church, as well as in their workplaces, neighbourhoods and families.

This fall we held our third annual community fall retreat. We rented Waupoos and had a fantastic weekend. We held inclusive worship services for all ages in the mornings and in the evenings spent time working through material about spiritual pathways, how different personalities connect with God differently and how we could create spaces for these differences. It was a rich time of fellowship, intergenerational play and relationship building.

In addition, this fall we looked at a series on Faith and Work. These conversations were meant to help people see their work as important and meaningful in hopes that they can learn how to integrate who they are on a Sunday with who they are the rest of the week. We had different community members share throughout the series what they were learning about work as a positive thing, the need for rest, and the role of excellence and integrity in their work. It is our hope to build on these conversations and become a community that equips people to live out their faith as a witness in the workplace.

As a community we are incredibly thankful for the partnership of the Gathering and for all that they do for us. It is amazing how supportive and helpful you are to us as a community, and we are thankful that we are not doing this journey of establishing a church alone. Thank you for cheering us on and providing resources and support.

## **Kids Ministry Report**

Prepared by Karen Prytulak

Welcome to Kidland at the Gathering!

We are so fortunate to have many children who attend the Gathering each week. Currently, we have 20-25 kids on a regular basis. It is wonderful to gather and help them grow in their faith.

From January to June 2023, all children up to Grade 5 met as a large group on Sunday mornings. We sang songs, listened to stories, made crafts, and learned about Jesus. The Fun Church/Nursery Age kids played at the back of the room and joined in the fun whenever they felt like it. Together, we learned about the Great Commission; the Attributes of God; the Characters of Easter; and the Parable of the Sower.

Throughout the summer months, Steven met with the children and talked through more Attributes of God by following the letters of the alphabet. We made a giant list of these characteristics; our children demonstrated a thorough knowledge of God!

Beginning in September 2023, Kids Church met again in our regular room and learned about a variety of things: the Father of Nations (Abraham); the many Names of God; Discovering Jesus; and Christmas Characters. Once again, Fun Church/Nursery children joined us at the back of our room. It's wonderful to see some of the older children try to engage their younger siblings in worship and crafts - little disciples in the making!

This year was our second in-person VBC event. It was held from July 17-21, 2023 at Parkway Community Church in Greely. We had about 45 children register for the camp in advance, and numerous teenagers volunteer to help us throughout the week. Steven, Kristyn, George, Daniel, and I spent many hours filming our VBC videos, preparing snacks, organizing crafts, practicing magic tricks, performing science experiments, and learning songs to make this an exciting event.

We based our activities around a train theme - A Journey of Miracles - where we studied a variety of Jesus' Miracles. We learned about Water into Wine, Feeding the 5000, Jesus Walking on Water, Raising Lazarus from the Dead, and the Paralyzed Man. We had an exciting time sharing Jesus with the many children who attended. We are looking forward to another fabulous VBC event in 2024.

Our volunteers are vital to our Kids' Ministry. Most volunteers helped out multiple times throughout the year. A huge thank you to everyone who stepped up to do so, especially to those who volunteered at the last minute.

Thank you for sharing your children with me; they are a precious gift and a true blessing! I look forward to hearing about their week and finding out what is new and exciting every Sunday.

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

This is my goal every Sunday!

Karen

**YOUTH MINISTRY Report**

Prepared by Matthew Wiebe, Youth Director at Parkway



2023 was a year of new beginnings as Jordan & Erica Slaven joined the Parkway staff in February 2023, Erica as the director for children's ministry and Jordan director of the youth ministry. Jordan used his time with the youth to cultivate relationship with students and leaders, maintain the leadership team in place, and provide a safe atmosphere for the students who attended. The weekly services saw an average of 10-15 students grades 6-12 attending, with newcomers slowly emerging during the beginning of September 2023. The average week consisted of a 20-minute sermon, followed by 15 minute small groups, then ending the night with an activity. In November 2023 Jordan stepped down from the youth director role, opting to join the kid's ministry as a volunteer alongside Erica. We are blessed to have him remain with us here at the church knowing that the relationships he invested in during his time with the youth will continue as paths cross throughout the year!

In November of 2023 I (Matthew Wiebe) took over as youth director, serving the remainder of 2023 as a volunteer and officially becoming a member of the staff in January of 2024. With 5 years' experience as a youth director, I am excited to focus this upcoming year on recruiting and developing the student leadership team and to increase worship from a monthly occurrence led by a member of the staff, to 3 out of 4 times a month with a member of our youth leadership team or a student leading. I also aim to create a weekly parent "Week at-a Glance" email that will communicate the opportunities your youth can join in on.

Please continue to pray for our team as we seek to be all things to all students so as many as possible may come to understand the Gospel!

## **Anchor Cause Update**

Prepared by Brenda Kirkwood

One of the significant milestones achieved in our Anchor Cause last year was the approval to move forward with the direction of addressing Food Insecurity, particularly through the launch of a Food Bank. With the completion of the key phases of Investigation and Learning, the Task Force has now transitioned into the Planning phase, targeting a Pilot launch in April 2024.

In this planning phase, we are thrilled to have the official name, "The Community Table" with a mission to connect neighbours in need with the love of Jesus by providing opportunities for relational connections and receiving essential grocery items. (Matt. 25:37-40, Matt.28:18-20.) We envision a community where food insecurity is being addressed with compassion, and our neighbours in need are cared for in the love of Christ (Lk 14:12-14, Jas. 1:27).

Looking ahead in the planning phase, our focus includes charitable registration, sourcing and planning out a space option (as Brierley's may be able to only offer the space until Fall 2024). Additionally, we are actively seeking partnerships and engaging in fundraising efforts, involving volunteers like you, local businesses, politicians, other churches, and non-profit organizations such as the United Way for grant applications.

While progress is being made on various fronts, including the development of our website, bylaws, grant writing, fundraising, budgets, operating models, and site preparations, we still require support in areas such as banking, insurance, community relations, client relations, media relations, and health compliance. If these areas align with your interests or expertise, we encourage you to reach out to any of our Task Force members: Dean Giesbrecht, Craig & Linda Cudmore, Kim & Jeff Jantzi, Brenda Kirkwood, and Ted McGregor. Your prayers remain the number one need as we work collectively towards the realization of this impactful initiative.

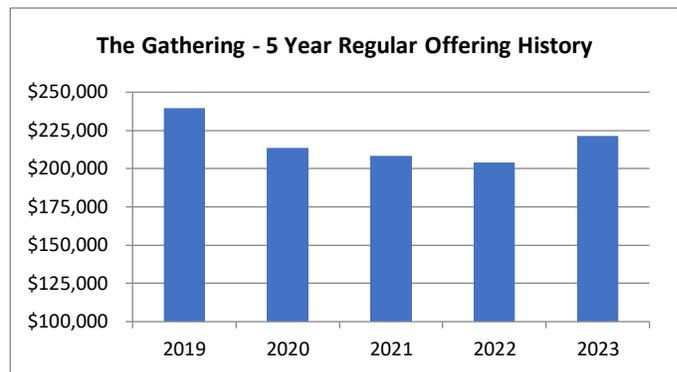
**TREASURER'S REPORT**  
Prepared by Michael Kirkwood

**Statement Of Operations - Year Ended December 31, 2023:**

Statement of Operations	2023	2023	Variance	2022	Variance
	Actual	Budget		Restated*	
Regular Offering	221,477	214,000	7,477	204,052	17,425
Special Offerings	6,999	6,000	999	0	6,999
Other Income	7,280	13,600	(6,320)	10,518	(3,238)
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>235,756</b>	<b>233,600</b>	<b>2,156</b>	<b>214,570</b>	<b>21,185</b>
Operating Expenses	50,324	49,400	924	45,816	4,508
Staff Expenses	146,481	154,100	(7,619)	152,831	(6,350)
Ministry Expenses	24,007	22,500	1,507	23,418	588
Outreach Expenses	8,759	9,000	(241)	6,941	1,819
Partnerships	9,589	9,600	(11)	9,014	(13,676)
GST Expense	603	0	603	0	603
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>239,763</b>	<b>244,600</b>	<b>(4,837)</b>	<b>238,020</b>	<b>1,743</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(4,008)</b>	<b>(11,000)</b>	<b>6,992</b>	<b>(23,449)</b>	<b>19,442</b>
Add: Deferred Revenue (Truck)	7,038	0	7,038	0	7,038
Less: Depreciation Expense	(8,123)	(9,000)	8,77	(2,491)	(5,632)
<b>Operating Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(5,092)</b>	<b>(20,000)</b>	<b>14,908</b>	<b>(25,940)</b>	<b>20,848</b>

**Statement of Operations Commentary:**

The Gathering's financial results improved materially in 2023 despite some unexpected events through the year. Our 2022 restated\* (see note below) financial results were a deficit of \$23k and we entered 2023 planning for a deficit of \$11k, which would get us half-way back to a balanced budget. I'm pleased to report that our results were much better than projected, resulting in a deficit of only \$4k.



**On the revenue side,** our "Regular Offering" results were the best we have seen in several years(!) as depicted in the graph to the right. Regular Offering of \$221.5k was \$7.5k higher than budgeted (and \$17k higher than 2022)! Thank you for your generosity in supporting the Gathering! The strong Offering was partially offset by a \$6k shortfall on "Other Income", primarily because we unexpectedly did not receive the Canada Summer Jobs Grant this year. In the end, total Revenue was \$2k higher than expected.

**On the expense side,** our Total Expenses were \$4.8k below budget, primarily due to Staff Expenses coming in \$7.7k below budget. The Staff Expenses were under budget due to staff medical leaves. The reduced Staff Expenses were partially offset by Ministry Expenses coming in \$1.5k over budget, primarily due to costs associated with Sunday morning services coming in higher than expected.

**\*Note on accounting change regarding the 2022 Truck Fund:** In 2022, we raised \$22.4k by way of special offering to purchase a truck and trailer for transporting our equipment back and forth on Sunday mornings. During the external financial review with our accountants ('MNP'), we received accounting direction that this special offering should not have been recognized as revenue all in the year it was received, and rather it should be spread out over the life of the truck and trailer (over the same period and on same basis as we depreciate the truck and trailer). As such, we have re-stated our 2022 results on this basis, and going forward will present a non-cash "Deferred Revenue" item in our statements, as above.

**Bytown Community Church:** The results above exclude Bytown Community Church. See notes on page 26 for more details regarding Bytown Community Church.

**Balance Sheet – As of December 31, 2023:**

	31-Dec-23	31-Dec-22 (Restated)*
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Chequing/Savings	60,194	57,895
Other Current Assets	10,426	18,783
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>70,620</b>	<b>76,678</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Cotton Candy Machine	72	90
Furniture & Fixtures	2,367	2,959
Truck & Trailer	18,886	23,461
Media Equipment	2,948	3,685
Photocopier	358	445
Computers	373	828
Music Equipment	280	350
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>25,284</b>	<b>31,821</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>95,904</b>	<b>108,499</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Credit Card	5,962	6,460
Accounts Payable	11,305	11,272
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>17,267</b>	<b>17,732</b>
<b>Deferred Revenue Liability</b>	<b>15,332</b>	<b>22,370</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Retained Earnings	68,397	94,337
Net Income	(5,092)	(25,940)
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>63,305</b>	<b>68,397</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>95,904</b>	<b>108,499</b>

**Balance Sheet Commentary**

The Balance Sheet reflects our overall financial health at the end of 2023, which is relatively unchanged versus the prior period re-stated financial position (see note on prior page re change to Truck Fund accounting).

At the end of 2023, we have a strong cash position of \$60k and another \$10k in other receivables for a total Current Assets just over \$70k.

We continue to have relatively little short-term debt other than our Credit Card (paid off monthly to avoid interest charges) and some other payables primarily related to accounting reviews where the costs have been accrued but not yet paid. We continue to have zero long term debt.

New this year on our Balance Sheet is the Deferred Revenue Liability, which represents the Truck Fund donations which have been received but not yet recognized as revenue. This is an accounting item only.

The church's Total Equity is relatively stable at \$63k, down slightly from prior year.

### **Multiplication Fund (incl Bytown Community Church)**

Financial results presented throughout this report represent results for our General Fund, and exclude revenues, expenses, and balances for the Multiplication Fund (Bytown Community Church). This presentation is for convenience purposes for the congregation; however, we do include the Multiplication Fund in all of our formal reporting, including results we report to Canada Revenue Agency, which are publicly available.

During 2023, the Multiplication Fund received \$102,431 in Total Revenue and incurred \$95,002 in Total Expenses, for a net surplus of \$7,429 for the year.

<b>Statement of Operations - incl Bytown</b>	<b>2023 Bytown CC</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>2023 The Gathering</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>2023 Consolidated</b>
Regular Offering	85,389		221,477		306,866
Special Offerings	0		6,999		6,999
Other Income	17,041		7,280		24,321
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>102,431</b>		<b>235,756</b>		<b>338,187</b>
Operating Expenses	3,429		50,324		53,753
Staff Expenses	81,866		146,481		228,347
Ministry Expenses	7,027		24,007		31,034
Outreach Expenses	2,455		8,759		11,214
Partnerships	225		9,589		9,814
GST Expense	0		603		603
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>95,002</b>		<b>239,763</b>		<b>334,765</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income / (Deficit)</b>	<b>7,429</b>		<b>(4,008)</b>		<b>3,421</b>
Add: Deferred Revenue (Truck)	0		7,038		7,038
Less: Depreciation Expense	0		(8,123)		(8,123)
<b>Operating Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>7,429</b>		<b>(5,092)</b>		<b>2,336</b>

Since its inception in 2017 to the end of 2023, the Multiplication Fund (Bytown Church) has accumulated surplus of \$40,192. As mentioned above, this accumulated surplus is excluded from the figures presented throughout this report.

#### **Notes to Financials:**

- All reports are produced, and all bookkeeping is entered using the accrual method.
- The depreciation on capital assets is taken using the prescribed rates set out by the CRA.
- These statements are for review by board and members.
- The production of these statements does not constitute an audit or an engagement review.
- The accounting firm MNP has been engaged to conduct formal reviews of our financial results, as required by the Ontario Non-profit Corporations Act (ONCA). The review of 2022 results was conducted through the fall of 2023 and into the winter. The review of 2023 results is planned for Fall 2024.

2024 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Offering	221,477	234,500	+6%
Special Offering	6,999	9,000	
Other Income	7,280	12,600	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>235,756</b>	<b>256,100</b>	<b>+9%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Insurance	4,259	4,000	
Office Rent	12,146	13,200	
School Rent	18,403	19,000	
Vehicle Expense	3,063	1,800	
Office Expenses	3,937	3,800	
Bank Fees	1,976	2,000	
Telecommunications	2,240	2,300	
Professional Fees	4,300	4,500	
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>50,324</b>	<b>50,600</b>	<b>+1%</b>
Staff & Student Salaries	123,402	133,200	
CPP, EI & Benefits	22,121	21,300	
Other	958	1,200	
<b>Total Salaries &amp; Compensation</b>	<b>146,481</b>	<b>155,700</b>	<b>+6%</b>
<b>Ministry &amp; Services</b>			
Small Tools & Equipment	358	400	
Supplies For Services	5,423	5,500	
Video's & Multimedia	140	200	
Honorariums	550	600	
Worship Supplies	1,524	750	
Youth Ministry	6,146	6,000	
Kids Ministry*	1,364	600	
Conferences	1,034	1,800	
Resources & Curriculum	987	750	
Volunteer Appreciation	579	500	
New Attender Luncheons	446	400	
Elder Meetings	1,135	1,000	
Benevolence	307	400	
Staff Ministry Expenses	4,013	4,200	
<b>Total Ministry &amp; Services</b>	<b>24,007</b>	<b>23,100</b>	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Community Life &amp; Outreach</b>			
Advertising & Marketing	2,689	2,500	
Events Expenses	6,070	6,500	
Vacation Bible Camp*	0	500	
<b>Total Community &amp; Outreach</b>	<b>8,759</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>+8%</b>
<b>Partnerships</b>			
Ontario MB Conference	9,000	11,000	
Compassion Canada	589	600	
Community Table	0	5,000	
<b>Total Partnerships</b>	<b>9,589</b>	<b>16,600</b>	<b>+73%</b>
GST Expense	603	600	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>239,763</b>	<b>256,100</b>	<b>+7%</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(4,007)</b>	<b>0</b>	
Add: Deferred Revenue (Truck)	7,038	4,900	
Less: Depreciation Expense	(8,123)	(6,000)	
<b>Net Income / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(5,092)</b>	<b>(1,100)</b>	

### **Budget Commentary**

The 2024 Budget projects a 6% offering increase along with modest increases to internal expenses (Operations, Salaries and Ministry Exp) and larger investments in Community Outreach & Partnerships for a **balanced budget for the 2024 calendar year** on a cash basis.

### **Revenue**

The **offering budget** has been set at a 6% increase from prior year which, based on recent offering trends, we believe is a reasonable stretch target for 2024. Offering has grown in recent months and so far in 2024 we are up significantly from prior year (up over 30% in Jan/Feb), suggesting 6% is very achievable in 2024.

We are further planning two Special Offerings in 2024 in **late spring/early summer**: (1) \$4k targeted to support the costs of community outreach events (Movie-in-the-Park, the Big Give), which we have done in past years, and (2) \$5k targeted to support the launch of the Community Table food bank initiative.

We have also re-applied for the Canada Summer Jobs Grant and are budgeting on expectation of receiving those funds. **Total revenue for the year is planned at \$256k.**

**Expenses**

We are planning for **total expenses of \$256k**, an increase of 7% from prior year.

**Expense highlights**

- **Operation expenses** are increasing by only 1%, as Office Rent increases are largely offset by lower Vehicle Expenses (2023 included a large one-time expense).
- **Salary & Compensation** expenses are increasing by 6% reflecting both cost of living salary increases as well as a return to a full year of Church Administrator costs.
- **Ministry** expenses are decreasing by 4%, due both to lower Worship Supply expenses as well as a re-allocation of Vacation Bible Camp expenses to the Community and Outreach category.
- **Community and Outreach** expenses are increasing slightly, due primarily to a re-allocation of Vacation Bible Camp expenses, as noted above.
- **Partnership** donations to external ministry partners / organizations are up significantly, due to an increase in our support to Ontario MB Conference (pegged at 5% of prior year offering) plus a \$5k contribution to the Community Table from the Special Offering.

**Non-cash Items**

The non-cash items of Deferred Revenue recognition and Depreciation expenses form part of the budget but are presented separately.

**The Board has approved this budget for the 2024 fiscal year.**

**FINAL COMMENTS**

By Jeff Jantzi

First, let me say “thanks” to everyone who contributed to this report: Colin, Dan, Karen, Matt, Brenda, and Michael! Each of you play a significant role in the life of our church and I am so grateful for you all.

Secondly, as we conclude this report, I also want to say thank you to each and every one of you who serve and contribute to the life of our church in whatever way you do. We need each other to be all that God has called us to be!

I am reminded of the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NLT): *"All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it."*

I'm so grateful to have you as a part of THIS local expression of the Body of Christ, especially in this season.

Keep leaning into Him and trusting Him for the future of our church, knowing that He has great things in store!

- Jeff