

Fall 2019 Vision Message, 11/10/19

I think these Congregational Sundays are some of the most important times that we gather as a church family. Not only because we elect leadership or approve budgets, but because it is one of the few times that we take the time to pause in the busyness of the life of the church and reflect on what God has done, is doing and that we trust he will do in the future. I was recently reflecting on my time as your lead pastor, and it dawned on me that this is my 5th Fall congregational meeting. I was looking for a passage of Scripture to put into words how I feel about being your pastor and where God has us as a church and the Lord gave me this passage that I believe captures it so well. In the words of David,

Psalm 52:8-9

⁸But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. ⁹For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good.

What struck me about this passage is that David's sense that he is **presently** secure and flourishing in the Lord (Like an olive tree flourishing), is based on the firm foundation of God's faithfulness in the **past** (For what you have done I will always praise you) and the living hope of what God will do in the **future** (I will hope in your name). Why? All because of WHO God is, past, present and future (Unfailing love for ever and ever).

This forms an outline of what I want to briefly share that God put on my heart for us today. God's Past Faithfulness, Our Present Flourishing, Our Hope for the Future.

God's Past Faithfulness

In the same way David was able to reflect back on all ways God rescued him, spared him, blessed him, and never abandoned him...so we too can look back at God's faithfulness to in Brandywine's history. Many of you might not be aware of this, but **January 2020 marks the 50th Anniversary** of Brandywine Valley Baptist Church. Mark your calendars Jan. 5-12 for a 2-week celebration we are calling "Great is Thy Faithfulness". Jan. 5th it will be a blast from the past as we reflect on God's faithfulness from the very beginnings in 1970. Jan. 12th we will do a 50 year look forward and dream about what it might look like for God to be faithful to Brandywine for the next 50 years. We want to give you the opportunity to practice Psalm 52:9 *⁹For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people.* We want to hear from you! **We want you to share with us how you have experienced God's faithfulness** in your life through the ministry of Brandywine. Two ways you can share your story: Text or go online. We want to capture these stories, from those attending 50 years or 50 days, young and old, long and short. We will use these stories to create something powerful and memorable. Sooner the better...if you don't use computers, feel free to write a letter and drop it off at the office.

Our Present Flourishing

An olive tree flourishes in all seasons IF it is firmly planted in the right soil. The Psalmist says in chapter 1, that for God's people that soil is God's unchanging, unfading Word- that is living in

active and reveals to us our great hope, Jesus Christ our Savior. In a day when many churches have abandoned fidelity to God's Word, when many are wondering how they will keep their doors open, we recognize that God has been incredibly gracious to us, keeping us firmly grounded and flourishing in this season. Evidence of flourishing is seen through all the new and diverse people coming through the doors, the increase in those serving in ministry, baptisms and a variety of ministries highlights you will hear later in the service. And while financial health doesn't always indicate true spiritual flourishing, it is one way that God is choosing to bless us. Over the last 2 years, Brandywine Leadership has made it a priority to be aggressive toward paying down our debt from building this beautiful sanctuary, adding classrooms, etc. Just for your reference, when I got here in September, 2015 we had roughly 5 million of building debt. Since then, through careful stewardship and your generosity, we have been building a reserve so that in November we will be able to pay down a significant portion of our debt. In addition, in the Spring this past year a handful of generous members offered to match up to \$355k of giving toward debt until the end of October. We put out this challenge to you and I would like to tell you the result of that match. We did not give \$355k. Instead we gave \$525k!! Praise God!!! This means that between April and October of 2019 you gave a total of \$880k! All while ending our fiscal year in Aug in the black for the 4th year in a row. Amazing. We will be down to around 1.5M remaining on our debt. You will be hearing from the chairman of the finance committee, Kevin Dombrowski, later in the service about the details. Listen, I want you to tell this story of what God can do. I want you to tell your kids and grandkids, because this is something that God has done among us and through us! Thank you for your generosity.

Our Hope for the Future

David's hope for his future was based on the Name of God, ancient way of saying I can trust what God has promised he will deliver. If David was to walk by faith and trust whatever God called him to do however big or small, God would always deliver. What is God calling us to do? Will we rest on our laurels and say, OK we've done enough...now we can coast for a while. Complacency and Comfort are the great enemies of any church and have been the enemy of God's people- just read your Bibles and look at history. As the great missionary William Carey once said, Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God. My promise to you is that we will seek God's will for our church and whatever we believe God is calling us to do, no matter how big, different or scary it may seem, we will pursue it by faith. We will attempt great things- striving to reach the lost for Christ, disciple the next generation, serve the under-resourced community in Wilmington.

One thing God is calling us to do over the next year to place a greater priority on shepherding the members of our flock. My conviction is that if we are going to be effective at outreach it starts with in-reach. Shepherding, discipling, an emphasis on meaningful membership, helping to heal the wounded sheep, knowing them by name. We can do better and we must do better. I think as Pastors, we are taking a reactive shepherding posture more than a proactive shepherding posture. Partly because there are 3 pastors, over 400 members and not to mention the 1200 people who call this place their church home to care for. We are going to do something about that. The ministry leadership team and the deacons are developing a plan to expand the shepherding of the flock and congregational care, I don't have details to share with

you but pray for us as we seek the Lord for how to best care for and disciple this congregation, and continue to build a culture of meaningful membership.

Psalm 52:8-9

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(Slide 1) **Fall 2019 Congregational Sunday Ministry Updates**

Kristi Pullig Update

My name is (Slide 2) Kristi Pullig. I'm the Children's Ministry Director. In our last congregational meeting, I told about Brandywine's core value, discipleship, and how it is intentionally planned into our (Slide 3) three main children's ministry environments. Today, I want to tell you a story about one third grade girl who comes to both hours on Sunday, to Awana on Wednesdays, plus VBS & just about any other event we have here in Brandywine Kids.

This girl had a friend over one weekend. The friend told her that she had always heard that the way to get to heaven was to do good things. She said that if you put the things you do on a scale and the good things outweigh the bad things, you could go to heaven. The "Brandywine Kid girl" said, "That's not true.". See, this girl knew truth so she recognized when something was not truth. She knew the gospel.

She was able to turn to her friend and say, (Slide 4) "That's not true. The only way to heaven is through Jesus." She asked her friend if she wanted to put her trust in Jesus. She took the friend to her mom and that day the friend put her faith in Jesus. Discipleship in Children's Ministry means we want to make disciples who make disciples. Kids learn the truth of the gospel and are prepared to tell others that truth.

Another core value has to do with (Slide 5) Gospel Partnerships. Last week, 33 of our 3rd-5th graders were able to go on the Philly Blitz mission trip. For this trip, we partner with The Philadelphia Project and Roxborough Church. This is a trip where kids don't just go to help adults with ministry. The kids actually lead the way. These 33 kids were divided into smaller groups.

Some did (Slide 6) construction and maintenance in a home and in a newly launched church, some went to a homeless shelter to play with other children, some set up food in a food pantry, and one group packed bagged lunches and handed them out to people who (Slide 7) live on the streets in center city Philadelphia. Our own kids were going up to homeless men and women, asking if they wanted some food and also asked them what they could pray for. These 8-, 9- and 10-year old boys prayed over people who had no home. All of our kids were struck by the fact that God could use them right now. Not just sometime in the future, but right now.

(Slide 8) God is using our children to reach the world with the gospel. Please pray that they will continue to know and understand what God's truth is. Pray that they will continue to be bold in following Jesus.

Matthew McNutt Update

I'm (Slide 9) Pastor Matthew McNutt, Pastor of Adult Education and Student Ministry. One of our core values as a church is that we are (slide 10) Bible centered, while at the same time generously orthodox. Basically, what that means is that we have certain doctrinal standpoints that we hold fast to, while recognizing there are other areas where we can have different opinions and still have unity.

(Slide 11) This past summer, our Adult Christian education Summer Series had the topic of Faith and Science; we spent nine weeks hearing different approaches to understanding the opening chapters of Genesis, we explored modern scientific questions through a biblical lens. We saw a great response and turnout, many of the weeks averaging between 160-200 people attending and participating.

One of the weeks we had a panel of leaders from our church discussing questions from the participants that were submitted ahead of time; my favorite was repeated by a few different people: we've heard all these different approaches, what is our church's official stance? And that's the beauty of being generously orthodox; we have official stances on the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and salvation – you can read our official stances on our website in our statement of faith. But the summer series represented one of those areas where we don't; we can have different approaches to understanding how God worked and still have unity. And I loved that we saw that play out each week in the classes. (Slide 12) If you missed out – the audio is still available online. We podcasted each of the weeks, so you want to check that out!

Student Ministry

Another core value of our church is (Slide 13) thriving families. One of the ways we pursue that is through ministry to (Slide 14) young people. We want to create a program that teens want to come to – the last thing a parent wants to do is fight with their teen about church. (Slide 15) This past September we kicked off the school year with our annual fall retreat. Participation has exploded at this event; a handful of years ago, it was averaging around 60-80 participants; this year we had 148. It was amazing to see our youth leaders bonding with the teens over the course of the weekend; (Slide 16) we played hard, but we also spent a lot of time in the word, had student led worship, and really focused on launching our student small groups for the year. (Slide 17) We also welcomed our newest team member, Elijah Cunningham. He's called to youth ministry and is excited to serve as our full-time intern as he continues to grow in his youth ministry and (Slide 18) pastoral leadership. I've loved seeing how he has jumped in and is already making a significant impact with our leaders and students in such a short time!

Larisa Forest Update

I am (Slide 19) Larisa Forest, worship & music director, speaking to our (Slide 20) core value of “excellence, relevance, and innovation” in our sanctuary worship. I spoke at the last congregational meeting about our goal to correct some ongoing audio challenges in our sanctuary, and I want to update you on our status.

You should know that any changes to our audio system were carefully pursued and chosen by an invested, diverse Brandywine team with our (slide 21) “multi-note” congregation in mind. What do we mean by “multi-note”? We believe that God’s people are not one size/one shape - “one note” - but that He designed us for “unity in diversity”, which is another of Brandywine’s core values. We are committed to a wide range and variety of musical styles and groups leading our worship on Sunday mornings and beyond, - and believe that reflects the body of Christ most accurately - so, we wanted any audio changes to serve a growing “multi-note” context. To serve contemporary bands and traditional choir, orchestra, children, student ministry and to serve you - a body of unique lives and stories gathered to sing to our Creator.

So at the end of August, we hired Spinnaker Multi-Media Solutions to move forward with the sound system proposal that we concluded best fit this goal. In October, we (slide 22) installed a new speaker system combined with repurposing and repairing several features of our as-built system. Speakers were placed in four strategic ceiling locations that are better designed to provide appropriate cleanness and quality of sound as well as even and consistent coverage in every space of the room. There have been other upgrades, some unseen, as well as the addition of platform subs, flexible stage monitoring, and some instrument miking.

Some of the tasks left to be completed in this project are:

- hiding the exposed ceiling cavities. We are currently working with a master carpenter to move forward with an aesthetic plan for this.
- removal and resale of superfluous, remaining pieces from our former as-built system (to hopefully fund any future sanctuary needs)
- to perform a final, comprehensive acoustic modeling/testing of the new system to make sure it is performing as projected and fine-tuning as necessary

It is extremely important to understand that a proper sound system will not solve sound challenges in any room by itself. It is a tool. Three things are necessary: proper tools, a committed sound team well-trained in mixing techniques, and high quality of musicianship all have to work together in tandem. Our team is committed to excellence in all of these areas, and I feel so grateful to have such a talented team working joyfully - with servant hearts - striving together for unity toward this end. Pray for us and seek to encourage those who serve you. Know that we pray for you all every week - that our technical efforts will be a conduit for what God is doing by His Spirit in all of our hearts to help us worship Him.

Finally, we urge your patience in the coming months as both our sound team and our musicians relearn how to mix the sound properly and beautifully with a new sound model. We are looking forward to the flexing of these components in the upcoming music-heavy Advent and Christmas season and as we lead you in the worship. Beneath all of this, we know Jesus is our real and true Worship Leader who in, and through, and even despite our best strivings, ultimately perfects our praise for us. May all of this work together to amplify the excellence of the One who sings over us.

Todd Johnson Update

Hello, I am (Slide 23) Pastor Todd Johnson, Pastor of Discipleship

(Slide 24) re|engage

This fall we began the 3rd semester of our impactful marriage ministry re|engage. In the last year and a half we have been able to minister to over 60 marriages, helping couples not just survive but rather to THRIVE. Our re|engage ministry is an outgrowth of our core value to (Slide 25) promote THRIVING FAMILIES. And so therefore our hope is that re|engage will be a catalyst that propels couples to have the types of marriages that reflect Christian virtue to a watching world.

One of the great things about re|engage this semester is that we have numerous unchurched couples attending; **and they keep coming back!** While they think they are coming just to improve their marriage, in reality what they are finding is much more.....and introduction to Jesus.

(Slide 26) You can continue to pray for our re|engage marriage ministry in the following ways.

- Thriving Couples (Families)
- re|engage Leadership Team
- Continued impact on the unchurched in our community.

(Slide 27) Small Group Ministry

We have identified 2020 as a target year for the growth of our small group ministry. 31% of our church is actively involved in a small group. While that's not a terrible number, what it tells us is that almost 70% of our church isn't engaged in small group fellowship.

Our Small Groups play a pivotal role in Christian discipleship this is where you will pray for one another, care for one another, reach out together and be empowered together by the Holy Spirit. This is one of the primary ways we follow the biblical pattern of multiplication...disciples making disciples. To encourage health/growth/multiplication within our small group ministry, here are some upcoming opportunities.

(Slide 28) November 17th – Small Group Interest Meeting (25yrs-50yrs)

The purpose of this meeting is to see how many couples/individuals within Brandywine are seeking small group fellowship. The hope is that this meeting will elicit both leaders willing to lead, and participants willing to be discipled. In addition mentor couples have been recruited to help facilitate any new groups that emerge from this meeting.

(Slide 29) January 25th – Small Group Leader Training

This small group leader training will be focused on two primary aspects. #1 developing new leaders, and #2 emphasizing the multiply model of small group ministry. New and existing small group leaders will be introduced to a new **Small Group Leader Training Manual**. This manual will help our small group leaders understand their role within the larger “church.” It will also help steer them away from their group being a social club, and towards a greenhouse of discipleship multiplication. Please pray for the multiplication of our small groups so that we can all be disciples who make disciples.

Brett Dorsch Update

(Slide 30) Brett Dorsch, Mission Team Coordinator

I’m honored to represent our great Brandywine missions team Carey Nathan, Tina Mah, Mandy Braselton, Adria Garhart, Ed Jones, Ed Rowse, Herb Schrock. And I’m grateful to be part of a church that makes missions a priority through our time, talents and treasures. Each month you hear Pastor Nate a missions spotlight that has hopefully increased your understanding of the various ministries we get to partner with as well as ways to be personally engaged in missions locally as well as globally. Today I want to give you a brief financial overview of the categories and extent of missions giving as well as highlight a few missions experiences this recently and coming up next year.

(Slide 31) There are 3 main categories in the actual budget

- stateside/local missionaries \$95,000
- Global missionaries \$68,000
- In-house missions and projects \$72,000

This makes up our missions budget of \$235,000

But this only captures budgeted missions giving. In addition, gifts are generously given by you, the congregation, beyond the budgeted missions giving toward initiatives such as:

(Slide 32)

- Student Missions Trips in the Summer
- Local ministries like: SBM, Door of Hope, Angel Tree, One4Wilmington, Love-in-Action
- And International partnerships with ministries in Haiti and Ukraine to name a few

(Slide 33) This represents a total of \$332,000 bringing total missions giving to over \$567,000.

So can we just take a moment to thank God for those who generously give toward these ministries? (Clap)

Let me also take a moment to briefly highlight three missions experiences:

1. (Slide 34) NVM/Haiti home we had built
2. (Slide 35) Ukraine Ministry

3. (Slide 36) New Missionaries in Africa, Pastor Steve and Mary Njenga (pronounced Jenga). They will be our guest missionaries for Missions month in Feb and we are planning to send volunteer team there in the Summer.

(Slide 37) Challenge: Would you consider a missions trip in 2020...maybe instead of a vacation?

(Slide 38) Thank you!