

Theme and Vision for 2018
35th Anniversary Year
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Each new year brings with it new possibilities and new opportunities. God's grace is more than enough for what each one of us will face this year. So, we begin the year with peace in our hearts knowing that **God is in control**.

In another week we will begin a week of prayer and fasting to prepare our hearts for what God wants to do in us and through us this year.

Each year we ask God to give us a theme for the year. **Since this year is our 35th anniversary as a church, we decided to make it a year of celebrating what God has done and is doing through us.**

He has done great things **and** He is **using us** to impact our families, friends, community and our world.

So, our theme for 2018 is "Celebrating God's Work Through Us".

We know it is because of God's faithfulness that we stand here today. It is by his power and might that we have been able to see many lives changed and the nations reached. So, we celebrate God and give him the glory!

We also want to celebrate each other this year. **It has been both the faithfulness of God and faithful people that has brought Petra through these 35 years to where we are today.**

- And it will be the same that takes us through the next 35 years.

So, this year we want to take time to appreciate what each of us brings to the Petra family and to the communities in which we live and serve.

The Apostle Paul, Silas and Timothy took time to celebrate and honor people around them. They valued the unique gifts and service of each person.

READ 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Vs.2 – We thank God for all of you....

I echo these words... Each one of you is worth celebrating. You are God's gift and blessing to someone. **You are valuable in God's kingdom even though you might not get public recognition.**

We know that **some of you are serving here at Petra and some of you are serving outside the walls of this church.** You are making a difference in your communities and in people's lives. Many of you are serving in ways most people are not even aware of, but God knows, and we thank God for you.

We can't publicly recognize everyone, but we can **create an atmosphere of honor among us.** To do this and to help *"Celebrate God's Work Through Us,* we are going to **put up a slide each week of someone here at Petra who is either serving here or in the community in some way.**

Today we will start with three people and then do one or two people each week through the rest of the year. We can't cover everyone, but by these examples we can get a feel of how God is using us as a church family.

PUT UP TODAY'S HONOREES

- Monroe and Miriam Roberts
- Paul and Lorraine Martin
- Terry and Marge Smoker

Let's take time this year to thank each other and appreciate each other.

The Apostle Paul **expresses three things** he is grateful for when he prays for the people. **These three things will help us grow and stand strong in 2018.**

The first thing he commends them for is **their work produced by faith** Vs. 3

1. God gives us faith to try new things and to be joyful in routine things.

Paul says, faith produces works of service in us. Our faith in God turns us outward. We have a purpose for our lives. We are willing to serve and try new things.

Early Petra stories 35 years ago, a small group of people stepped out in faith to start a new church. We didn't have a building, we didn't have paid staff.

All we had was a **vision and faith and a few committed people** who didn't mind the inconvenience that comes with starting a new church.

- **Set up and tear down each Sunday** in a firehall community room
- **Nursery** table corral. **Youth** had to walk through the cold to their room up the street. Worship team rehearsed in the hallway – next to the fire engines
- We had to pause our service when the **sirens** went off.

Over the years we have had some very exciting meetings and events. But for the most part it has been **faithful people joyfully serving** Sunday after Sunday and week by week.

God gives us faith to try new things and to be joyful in routine things. Maybe this year God is asking you to step into something new that you haven't done before. Take a step of faith. Push through the inconvenience and challenges and fears.

OR Maybe God is wanting to **breathe new life and joy into what you are doing right now.** He wants to **give you eyes of faith** to be able to see him at work in the routine of your life. **Can you see him at work? At school? He is there.**

Most of the great things God does he does while we are in the midst of our routine. He surprises us. He moves suddenly and often unexpectedly. Jesus encountered people in their routine day. As they were working. As they were sleeping. And sometimes while they were worshipping in the temple.

Expect God to do the unexpected in your life this year. He is that type of God.

The second thing the Apostle Paul commends them for is **their labor prompted by love.** Vs.3

2. The motivation of love changes everything. It turns your service into worship before God.

Our work becomes more than work when it is motivated by love for people and God. When your heart is truly to serve people instead of just getting a paycheck something changes in you.

When you serve here at Petra out of a motivation of love, ministry becomes life giving to you and to those you serve.

Paul is saying, whatever you do – let it be prompted from a heart motivation of love. **Let your serving be driven by love.**

He puts it this way in 1 Cor 13....

1 Cor 13:1-3 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. NIV

A good question to ask ourselves from time to time is... Why am I doing what I am doing? What is my true heart motivation?

At times the Holy Spirit checks my heart about things I am doing. Is it for the praise of men? Is it to make me look good? Is it for my benefit or others?

Over the past 35 years I have tried hard to keep my heart and the heart of Petra pure and humble as we serve this community.

Is our labor prompted by love? Are we here to make a name for ourselves and lift Petra up or are we here to serve our community and co-labor and honor the other churches around us.

The third thing the Apostle Paul commends them for is **their endurance inspired by hope.** Vs.3

3. When you have hope you are able to endure and push through anything.

Hope is powerful. When I have hope that I am making a difference and things can change it makes me want to try all the harder.

We need to believe that our lives are making a difference. If we believe our serving is making a difference, we will want to serve more. If we believe our prayers are making a difference, we will want to pray more.

Endurance is an important trait for God's people. Things are getting harder for Christians around the world. People are less tolerant of us. Through the ages the enemies of Christ have tried to wipe out Christianity but are not able to do so because **we have a living hope that endures forever.**

The past 35 years have not all been easy. But we always had hope that God would see us through.

- We went through some difficult financial times where we had to make some deep cuts.
- We had some difficult transition times where we made major changes to our staffing and leadership structure.
- We have had our share of growing pains, but God has been faithful, and we have been inspired by hope to push through.

One thing I have learned over these many years in ministry that has given me hope and helped me stay positive in uncertain times is that - **God always has a plan!**

So, whatever you are going through this morning know this – God has a plan – He is working your situation out for something with eternal value that is to your good.

Conclusion:

As a church, as we look forward to 2018 we are expecting great things because we serve a great God. He delights in doing above and beyond what we ask or imagine.

- We continue to look for opportunities to welcome 200 new followers of Jesus to our church family. 2 year goal – In the past year 31 adults have made a faith commitment that we know of, plus 43 children.
- This year we want to renovate the farm house that has been sitting empty. With a team of volunteers and donations we hope to turn it into two apartments. One for affordable housing and one for missionaries to use. You will be hearing more about this. Matt Kulp is heading up this venture for us.
- We want to keep finding practical ways to show the love of Jesus to our local community.

- We are blessed by our passion for missions and want to keep sending people around the world. We have 63 adults and their children on the mission field right now and 12 more getting ready to go in 2018. We have touched 17 countries.
- We want to deepen our relationships with each other here at Petra through our life groups and by doing ministry alongside each other.
- We want to see our SLC mortgage reduced this year.
- We want to be intentional in continuing to raise up leaders and to meet our growing staffing needs.
- We hope to see a thriving young adult ministry develop at Petra this year.
- We want to increase our ability as a church to be a resource and blessing to the Hopewell Network of churches that relate to us.
- Our goal is to see prayer become a greater part of every ministry.

By God's grace this church and our mission will continue to go forward for another 35 years and beyond as we walk in Faith, Hope and Love.

Stand for a New Year's blessing:

Blessing

May your faith and love grow deeper and stronger this coming year
 May hope, create in you a resilience and endurance to see breakthroughs
 May you wake up each day with thankfulness in your heart and
 May your mind be drawn to the positive in the people and world around you
 May you enjoy good health, and may God prosper the work of your hands
 May grace and peace guide and keep you through this year as you remember God
 is in control and God has a plan!