

Dear Church family,

This week we come together to kick off the fall season. It's a new season of worship and fellowship as a congregation. We might ask ourselves, *what is going to happen differently this year than years past?* Just so you know, I don't have the answer to this question, but I do anticipate that God has a plan.

God tells us in Jeremiah 29 He about this very plan. If we want to know what that looks like, we must look at the Word.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.

These verses reveal His love for mankind. Even as we are struggling from day to day, we have the confidence in knowing God has a plan! A specific plan for each individual, and a plan for His church. We as a congregation are His church. Looking closely at the words written, we find several promises directly from our Heavenly Father. He will prosper us and give us hope and a future with reassurance of His promise to never harm us *when we seek Him with all our heart.*

So once again, what does this new season look like? If we look at our Vision and Mission statement written in the bulletin every week, we find our age-old path.

Our Vision: Making God visible to all.

Our Mission: that everyone knows the grace of God, by proclaiming the good news of Jesus; by demonstrating the love of Christ; by personally inviting others to move into a new life in Christ; by encouraging the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look together at these two statements and come to understand each of our roles in accomplishing this good work of furthering the Kingdom of God here on earth as we make heaven a reality to many.

Remember the acronym for the word Bible:

B - Bring us Jesus

I - Instruct us in Jesus

B - Build us up in Jesus

L - Lead us to Christ

E - Equip us to bring Jesus to all people.

Let's consider how our Vision, our Mission and our understanding of the eternal value of the Bible work together. God's Word promises His grace and mercy, salvation only found in Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to those who believe.

With this in mind, and the Jeremiah 29 scripture, how might this congregation—and ultimately our community—be prospered, live in the hope that God gives us and look forward to a bright future? We must call out to God! We must pray to Him; we must seek Him. We must be active in our relationship with Him. And then, in my mind, we must start looking out of our normal circles so that we might see those watching and waiting for an invitation to come, to find a place away from the world and its demands, a place full of the promises of a God who loves all.

Our path is clear. How we walk it out reveals our heart. My prayer for this new season is simply this: we welcome those God brings into this place and are open to their individual needs and gifts of service.

John 17:6-19

⁶“I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your Word. ⁷Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You. ⁸For I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine. And glory has come to Me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am

coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your Name, the Name You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that Name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³ “I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

This prayer from the very heart of Jesus to His Father is so comforting as His words reveal to us His protection and our very purpose as we work together to bring eternity to the world. Jesus prayed us to work—eternal work! A new season is not a date on the calendar that is here today and gone tomorrow. It is an awareness of moving on the path designed just for us by our Creator. One step at a time, one prayer at a time, one relationship at a time.

Love in Christ,

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Call to Action: Envision what you believe God wants our church to look like. Pray with confidence that it will happen. Look up Luke 11:9. Seek God’s will for our congregation in His Word and ask God what your role is. Are you already doing it, or is God giving you another path to follow? Step out in confidence and obedience.