

A Special Church Planting Announcement

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Preacher: FMC Leadership

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning church. If you're a guest with us today, today's service will be unusual and unlike what we commonly do.

Often we're in a, currently we're in a sermon series through the book of Acts and we usually exposit a piece of scripture in a consecutive order through a book of the Bible, currently in the book of Acts and but today we're going to take a brief, we're going to suspend that for one week because there's just a special announcement that we would like to make and so we've been saying there's a special service and a special announcement today and many of you have been asking what this is about and well today you get to hear.

So to share how the service will go, it's going to be unusual in that today's message will be more of an appeal and more of a, it may feel a little more like an appeal or I'm going to try to make a case for something. Secondly, then there's going to be a formal announcement from the elders that you'll hear and then thirdly, there's going to be a structured Q&A; time to help respond and add some color and flavor to the announcement that you'll hear and so with that, let me try to make a case. I want to make a case for why church planting is the backdrop of the book of Acts.

It serves as the backdrop to the book of Acts that we see. What do we see? We see the gospel is preached, people believe in Christ, they are baptized, then they begin to gather, elders are established and then churches are planted.

And this is the pattern that you'll see all throughout the book of Acts. We see this in Derby and Lystra, Iconium as we followed the missionary Jerchoas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and we could keep going.

[2 : 0 4] And all throughout the world, the gospel is preached, people believe and are baptized, elders are given to that church and then people are mature and grow in their relationship with the Lord and then they plant a church and the gospel goes forward and even here at 4th Memorial Church in 1902.

In 1902, we owe a debt of gratitude for some believers in Christ who decided at this location to plant a church and we all are the recipients of this grace gift that was given to us of some people wanted to reach Spokane for Christ and the planted 4th Memorial and we're the recipients of this.

And that is occurring all throughout God's Word. It is the backdrop of the book of Acts. So I want to share with you five reasons why we ought to be planting churches as 4th Memorial.

First reason is it's the Great Commission reason, it's what Jesus said. And so let me read the Great Commission found in Matthew 28, 16 through 20. This is the foundational verse for our mission statement as a church because it begins with, all authority has been given to me on heaven and earth, this is Jesus speaking, then he says, go therefore and make disciples.

And our mission statement of the church is to make disciples who are transformed by the gospel for the glory of God. Why do we have this mission statement to make disciples? Because that's the central verb in the verse of go therefore and make disciples of all nations, not just here domestically but internationally, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and lo I am with you always even to the end of the age.

[4 : 01] To make disciples, it's the central verb. You cannot do what Jesus is saying in Matthew 28, that is the Great Commission, until you plant a church in Acts chapter 2. In other words, you can't make disciples without a church.

You can't have a church without a church being planted. Since church planting is the most effective means of reaching people for Christ, globally, church planting is the most effective means for reaching the lost without Christ.

To the tune of 15 times more effective. You want to have an outreach event internationally, 15 times more effective than any other outreach that you could do is you could plant a church.

That would be more effective than any other form of an outreach. Domestically here in the United States, 6 to 8 times more effective in reaching the lost is planting a church over all other outreach forms of outreach.

6 to 8 times. So then church planting, planting churches is the effective way of engaging the Great Commission to make disciples.

[5 : 09] Making disciples begins with conversion. And what is the most effective means of engaging the lost? Planting churches. Domestically, 6 to 8 times.

So you say, Scott, was this the only way to engage in the Great Commission work? No, not at all. And of course not. What I am saying though, it is the normal expression of the New Testament church.

Churches are planted. People are raised up and disciples are made. People are sent out for the purpose of planting church and the work of God is continued. We see this with Paul and Barnabas sent from the church at Antioch. The Gospel is shared and the natural outcome of them maturing the church.

Maturing the church in Antioch, God then says, hey church, set apart for me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work that I have called them to. And then they are sent.

What saddens me is that church planting has become the abnormal expression of the modern American Christianity. You may say, well Scott, Spokane has so many churches, planting churches in Spokane, why would you do that?

[6 : 18] I want to just share with you a few things. I deliberately chose a pre-pandemic year in the year 2019. So before 2020, I didn't want to, well, let me just share.

In 2019, a study was released that analyzed the church data among 34 Protestant denominations in America. And among those 34 Protestant denominations, evangelical Protestant denominations, 4,500 churches closed their doors in 2019.

3,000 new churches were planted. That was a 1,500, a net loss of churches of 1,500 in America.

And the pandemic years gets much worse. I read another article that says in the next five years, one-fifth of the churches that exist in America likely will close.

America is losing churches every year. And the result of that is America will become increasingly unchurched. The result of that, America will become increasingly secular, increasingly sinful.

[7 : 37] The result of that, so why plant churches in Spokane? We have a responsibility to our Jerusalem as much as we do to our Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the world.

If there is lostness in Spokane, there is a need for a church. Point in any direction in Spokane, and I will show you a people who are far from the Lord.

The establishment of a new congregation through disciple-making church planting will be normative. This is not a church planting command.

It is a command, though, to make disciples. And when you're a faithful in the disciple-making effort, what is the natural outcome of that will be a church that's going to be planted. Second reason is the hermeneutic reason, and I'll define hermeneutic here in a minute.

But if the Great Commission reason is what Jesus said, then the question is, well, what did the disciples do? And that's a hermeneutic reason. Let me explain why. The hermeneutics means it's a science of interpreting scripture.

[8 : 44] It's what every pastor, it's what every Bible study teacher ought to be good at. And may I submit to you that you would be what every congregation member should be good at. And let me illustrate the importance of this.

Let's assume I said, hey, I enlisted to set the world record in squatting.

There's a guy whose name is Ray Williams. He set the world record in 2019 for squatting over a thousand pounds. A weightlifting bar on his shoulders, he squatted over a thousand pounds. And you say, I'm going to do that.

And you say, well, Scott, what makes you think that you can squat over a thousand pounds when that's clearly, I don't know why you would say that, but clearly not in your wheelhouse.

And I responded to you, well, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And let's assume I come over to your house and I believe it.

[9 : 43] And so I sign up and I'm going to do this because I can do all things through Christ and strengthens me. And I come over to your house and on another day and you're serving dessert to everyone and it's vanilla bean, Tillamac vanilla bean ice cream with a little bit of chocolate.

And you say, Scott, the guests have all been served and I just have this extra healthy portion left in the carton. And so I'll just serve it in your bowl. Do you mind? And do you think you can make your way through that?

And I say, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. We laugh, but here's the thing. If that's what Paul said, and that's found in Philippians 4.13, what is the context that Paul was communicating?

Surely Paul is not communicating. You can weight lift anything you want and you can eat anything you want. That's not what Paul is communicating. And how we know that is the context.

It's the hermeneutic. It's the science of interpreting scripture. Scripture does not, and I want to share with you, I am guilty of this. Early in my younger years in ministry, I would have a little home group and things like this.

[10 : 52] And I would ask these questions. So I'm just as guilty as anyone else in this, but I would say, so what does that verse mean to you? Secondly, I would ask, share how that text may make you feel or how are you going to respond to that?

How does it make you feel? I can tell you, Scripture does not care what you feel about it. The definition of marriage, therefore, man shall leave his father and mother and be joined his wife. The two shall become one flesh, marriage between one man, one woman, forever.

It doesn't care how you feel about that. That's true. Secondly, it doesn't matter what it means to you. It matters what was meant when God said it.

So if the Great Commission reason is what Jesus said, it matters what the disciples did upon hearing that. And that should inform us. So if Jesus says this Great Commission, well, then it's good for us to go.

How does that make me feel? The Great Commission, you know, going to be a little embarrassed if I have to share the gospel with someone. No, I don't care how it makes you feel. I don't care what it means to me.

[11 : 55] It means what God said. And one of the ways we can tell what God meant when he said the Great Commission is how the disciples responded. Everyone with me? The hermeneutic reason, what the disciples did, matters greatly.

So what did the disciples do? In John 20, he sends the disciples. In Luke 24, he sends the disciples. In Acts 1, he says, Wait for the Holy Spirit, this empowerment for ministry. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you shall be my witnesses.

So what do they do? They do just that. They bear the gospel. They witness for Jesus Christ. And churches are planted.

History and tradition informs us that Thomas went to India and he planted churches. Peter went to Asia Minor. Paul goes to churches where they've never been planted before.

And so when Jesus said, I will build my church, what do the disciples do? They plant churches. Fifthly, the reason for planting churches, the example reason.

[12 : 58] There are two examples I want to compare and contrast. One is the church of Jerusalem. The second is the one in Antioch. Firstly, the one in Jerusalem. I want to say it started well, the church of Jerusalem.

And we see that in the book of Acts. But if you follow that church, there's a subgroup of the church that ended up being called the ebionites, who fell back into mosaic law.

And you can hear this in the book of Acts. You can hear this undercurrent that is there. And that is the ebionites. What did they want it to do? They required circumcision to participate in the community of a church that required, those people required circumcision.

They were later declared heretics by the early church fathers. But let's just pause for a moment. In Jerusalem, what was the flavor of the church in Jerusalem?

They maintained and held to their traditions. In Acts 11, we saw how those churches were of the circumcised party, we're told in Acts 11, criticized Peter for eating with Gentiles, namely Cornelius.

[14 : 01] Second, in Acts 11, after Stephen is stoned, the church is displaced all throughout the land. What did they do? They go share the gospel and the Gentiles come to faith.

And the church of Jerusalem sends Barnabas to Antioch to inspect the claims that these uncircumcised Gentiles had indeed come to Christ. So the Jerusalem church doesn't send people out to plant churches.

The Jerusalem church, oh, they send people out all right, but they're sending out people out to inspect what other churches are doing. Jerusalem church not only inspects, but they express their grave concern over how those other churches are being planted.

Those Gentile churches who are filled with uncircumcised people, can they truly be saved? You mean to tell me that you're not requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised?

Fourth, let us not be focused on the practices and preferences and lose sight of the mission of making disciples. It is the natural outflow of making disciples is church planting.

[15 : 08] Better model is the church at Antioch. It becomes the ascending church and says while they were in Acts 13, and we read this a few weeks ago, while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart to me Paul and Barnabas for the work that I have called them.

And then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. We have to celebrate the sending.

Why? Because sending is so present and then character of God. For God so loved the world, he gave his son, he sent his son.

We celebrate multiplication. One of the signs of all living things, healthy things, is they reproduce. The normal practice of living things is they reproduce. Why celebrate church planting?

What you celebrate, you become. We celebrate baptisms because we celebrate new life in Christ, of someone experiencing Christ.

[16 : 12] And we are reminded of what the regenerating power of God in a person's life. The church at Antioch celebrates. God told them to set them apart for the work that God had called them to.

And so they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas, sent them, blessed them and celebrated with them. You celebrate what you become. If we as a church celebrate long debates, philosophical arguments, theological wranglings, fourth will be driven by that, we will become that kind of church.

But if we celebrate reproduction, if you work hard at theological training, deliberate disciple making, intentional community making with the natural end of church planting, then fourth we will be driven by that.

Church planting is the logical outflow of sincere disciple making. Thirdly, fourthly, the congregational reason. It is God's intent that every believer be a part of a congregation that is living on mission.

God desires to glorify himself through congregations of people who are making him known. And when churches make him known among every tribe and nation and tongue, ultimately giving him praise, God is chiefly glorified.

[17 : 30] And I would like for everyone to be a part of a church like that. Let me just spotlight a few people. Before I spotlight the two people, let me share with you where they are or will be going.

Radius International is a ministry that is found in Tijuana, Mexico. If you will, Radius International is the last stop in a mission's training for individuals who don't want to necessarily go out on mission, but who want to go on a mission to reach the most unreached.

So those who go to Radius International have it in their mind. I'm going to give the rest of my life potentially to serving internationally in this context, learning a language and reaching an individual that is yet unreached for Christ.

Danny Sandberg is currently there and she is going to be returning here shortly. And what is she and her team that she's going to go with to Central Asia to a very hard country?

What is she knowing she's going to give 20, 30, 40 years potentially the rest of her life to what endeavor? To ensuring a church is planted among the most unreached.

[18 : 39] And she is finishing her time there at Radius International. Karris and Tyler, who are not here this weekend, Karris and Tyler are getting ready to go to Radius International to do that very thing, to begin that process and they too recognize that for the next 20, 30, 40, the rest of their life potentially, they too will give themselves to this cause to ensure an unreached people come to Christ.

But they're going to do that through church planting in that unreached, among those unreached places, peoples. But it starts with all of us sharing the gospel and reproducing as disciples.

I'm grateful that this church in 1972, we have a heritage of planting churches, planted Valley Fourth Memorial Church. In 1976, Northview Bible Church was planted.

And aren't you grateful that there are individuals in Spokane who have a place to be as believers in Christ, to worship the Lord and to raise up disciples and to plant churches?

Let me spotlight Northview just for a moment. 1976, Fourth Memorial Church planted Northview Bible.

[20 : 00] At Northview Bible, they planted a church called Indian Trail Church. And do you know who's the recipient of a benefit of planting North Indian Trail, a granddaughter church of Fourth Memorial Church?

We are. Pastor Josh Kieber, our worship director, came from Indian Trail. I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful.

For Spokane being blessed by churches that were planted out of this church. And I desire for the DNA of Fourth Memorial Church to be a passion for planting churches.

Last, and for me, this is one of the most compelling reasons. I wanted to phrase this, the glory of God reason, but it loses its clarity a little bit.

And so I chose the lostness reason, but please know this is closely attached to the glory of God. That is why it's participating in God's mission.

[21 : 12] Some might say, well, Scott, we have so much here to do it for. Our worship center is not even full. Why are we focused on church planting? Scott, we need to develop our missions program, intensive higher children's program, concentrate on men's ministry, start more small groups, work on developing community, expand the youth ministry, focus on the women's ministry, and reignite the senior adult ministry, and let's not forget giving attention to Riverview.

We have so much work to do here, Scott. Why are we even talking about church planting? First, let me agree with that sentiment. We do have so much to do, and it is not lost on me.

All there is to do here, and it is what is so exciting about the ministry of Fourth Memorial Church. I don't get to go home and twiddle my thumbs and rest on my laurels and say, oh, isn't this just really good?

It is not lost on me. That said, I would do well. We would do well to remind ourselves of the parable in Luke 15. And if you would, would you please go home and read the entirety of Luke chapter 15?

I'm just going to skim the three parables that are found in there, and I want us to listen to these words. Luke 15 begins with the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sun.

[22 : 33] But let's review these one real slowly. Luke 15 begins with the lost sheep, verses four through seven. It says, what man of you having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the 99 in open country and go after the one that has lost until he finds it?

A few verses later, he says this, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over the one sinner who repents than over the 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. So if you will, and look at the joy that is in heaven over that, God is glorified when that one sinner repents.

So then let us be diligent to share the gospel with our neighbors individually, and then let us corporately as a church plant churches, why? It is the most effective means of reaching the lost.

Six to eight times more effective. Then we come to the parable of the coin. Here's what verse five reads. Now, what woman having ten silver coins has lost the one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house seeking diligently until she finds it?

[23 : 52] A few verses later, just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

So there is joy in heaven, there is joy among the angels before God, over one sinner who repents.

If we want God to be glorified, we want the Lord to receive much glory. One of the best, most effective things we could do is plant churches, share Christ individually and corporately plant churches.

Lastly, the prodigal son or the lost son. The father divides his inheritance. Let me summarize. The father divides his inheritance. The son, the younger son squanders his inheritance, but then ultimately in a destitute frame returns home. The son says to the father, so now I'm going to read a verse where the son returns to the father having squandered all that the father has given him.

He says, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy. We called you son, but the father said to his servants, bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and bring him a ring and put it on his hand and his shoes for his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate.

[25 : 12] If the two parables before that told us about the joy of the Lord and the angels, this parable demonstrates the joy of the Lord.

The responding older brother who isn't happy about the returning squandered younger son or brother, this is what the Lord says to that older brother. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad.

For this year, your younger brother was dead and now is alive. He was lost, but now he is found. We would do well to remind ourselves of Luke chapter 15.

We have a lot of good things going on here. There's a lot of things to do here, but we cannot forget that there are those without Christ and the most effective means of evangelism, the most effective means of outreach to the lost is planting a church.

So let me pray to conclude this time before we transition. Father, Lord, indeed there is a lot of work to do here and you are working in and among us and through us and that is very exciting.

[26 : 32] Lord, help us to improve in the ways we make disciples from all age groups. Encourage us with boldness to share our faith knowing the such joy in heaven when one repents.

Burden us for the lost. In your name, Jesus we pray. Amen.

I'd like to move now into the announcement and then I would like, in fact, if I could have David and all of the elders come forward, I would like for that to occur now.

But before David shares, I would like to share what the Lord has been doing. God has been working in my heart. God has been working in the elder's lives.

God has been working in Pastor Eric's heart. And Pastor Eric has come to us and has said, I would like to plant a church.

[27 : 43] And so let me just share briefly the guts of the announcement and then the elders have prepared a formal announcement that David is going to read and then we're going to move into a Q&A; time with Eric and Brooke in just a moment.

But let me just share with you the guts of the announcement. That by God's grace, He has gifted us with Pastor Eric. And in two years' time and perhaps the spring of 2024, Forth Memorial Church is looking to plant a church with Pastor Eric.

To the upper South Hill area is where we're looking to plant a church. You'll hear more about that here in a moment. But that's the guts of the announcement, just to know where we're going with this.

And now I would like for David, who serves on a team with Pastor Eric, myself, David, and Kamesh, two of your elders, in working on, if you will, a subcommittee team of working on a plan to plant this church.

And so, but all of the elders have prepared a formal announcement that I would like for David to read to us at this time. So this is from the elders. David, would you please read?

[29 : 00] Yes. As we've kind of been kind of working through all this, we've all, ourselves, had a variety of emotions and mixed emotions in all this.

But I think we're at the point now where we're excited and this is good news, and this is something that we want to bring to you kind of in a spirit of excitement.

And we must pray that as you have your chance to kind of process this, that you'll kind of join us in that excitement. As we have collectively immersed ourselves in the book of Acts over the last several months, we have deeply desired that God would work in us through the proclamation of His Word.

Just as the Holy Spirit moved the early disciples to become the instruments of fulfilling Christ's promise that He will build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it, we must pray to also be a part of God's work.

Throughout the 2,000-year history of the church, faithful men and women have stepped up and said to God, Here I am, send me. They did so at great cost to themselves and their loved ones, all because they counted God to be worthy of greater love than any other.

[30 : 16] We are here because of their sacrificial faithfulness. The 120-year history of this church also attests to that pattern of faithfulness. Its own inception was owed to those who discerned the need for access to the gospel in this neighborhood of Seville, Cannes.

Later, 50 years ago in 1972, this church planned another in the Greater Spokane region and followed it a few years later in 1976 with another one in a different area to continue this biblical pattern.

In God's sovereignty, even our unintended church planning due to theological and philosophical differences in 1992 and 2006 served to further the cause of the gospel in the region to God be the glory for taking our failures and turning them into something good.

That commitment to remaining an instrument of God's purposes is reflected in our mission statement, to make disciples transformed by the gospel for the glory of God.

We must make disciples locally, regionally, and globally. Everything we've said so far is the why behind the what we now share with you. God has been moving in the heart of our leadership starting with Pastor Scott and the rest of the elders, that we are entering a season to plant a new church in the Greater Spokane region.

[31 : 37] That leads us to the who. The most important aspect of planting a church is the right person or persons. We saw that when the Holy Spirit declared to the church in Antioch to set Barnabas and Saul apart from me for the work to which I have called them.

God has been preparing someone in our midst for this work, Eric Morse. He joined this church after he moved to Spokane to support Brooks' pursuit of graduate studies.

Then Pastor Keith and the elders were impressed by this young man and offered him a role as a youth pastor. Since then he's also served as the worship director, the young adult pastor, and has preached regularly.

Along the way he began and completed his Master of Divinity degree and has now made good progress toward his Doctorate in Ministry degree. More importantly, he has grown in godliness.

A few months ago the elders unanimously affirmed Eric's gifts in calling to lead a church. Therefore it is fitting that Eric Morse will be the lead pastor of this church plan.

[32 : 43] Eric has been working with Pastor Scott and a subgroup of elders to discern the where question. It took a detailed analysis of demographic data and the availability of churches that fit our ministry philosophy in various neighborhoods in the Greater Spokane region for this team and the rest of the elders to arrive at an answer to this question.

Finally we have settled approximately on the far South Hill Moran Prairie area. While some of the details of the where are yet to be worked out, how this new church will serve the Lord's purpose is clear.

This church plan will be broadly reformed, characterized by the five solas of the Reformation, have expository preaching, have a biblical ecclesiology that is governed by a plurality of pastors elders, uphold the complementarity of men and women in the image of God, and emphasize the Great Commission.

When will this happen? The public launch of this new church will happen in fall 2024. To enable that Eric will transition from his current duties and be commissioned as the lead pastor on Memorial Day Sunday in 2024, exactly two years from now.

As you can see, make sure I said Memorial Day Sunday if I didn't say that, as you can see we are bringing you into our plans at an early stage so we can appropriately express our appreciation for Eric with the full range of emotions of sadness and excitement.

[34 : 22] Also so that Eric can prepare well to succeed and fourth leadership can find ways to fill his big shoes. Because of the significance of this matter, we request four things of you.

First, the church at Aniak likely felt the loss of stellar leaders like Barnabas and Saul, and the church at Lister would have felt similarly about Timothy.

Yet they valued God's kingdom over the personal benefit of having these servants in their midst. In the same way, let us appropriately recognize we will miss regular fellowship with and benefit from the ministry of Eric.

But please redirect that to praise God's plans for this new church and trust God's provision for this church. Second, don't merely release Eric but support him in every way that God is calling you to do.

Third, pray for the elders, specifically the subgroup mentioned previously who are working closely with Pastor Eric as we seek God's wisdom and discernment as we seek the Lord's heart for this endeavor.

[35 : 34] Fourth, strive to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4-3. We do not yet have the answers to many questions. Let me repeat that. We don't yet have the answers to many questions.

Please be charitable while we strive to launch a healthy team surrounding Pastor Eric and concurrently do all we can to backfill his position here to ensure the ministry of 4th Memorial Church continues in strength.

We recognize what we have shared will take time and prayer to process properly. There are numerous things, some we don't, some we know and many that we don't.

All those need to be worked out over the next two years for this vision to become a reality. From this point forward, Pastor Scott will communicate on behalf of the elders on this matter. We invite you to join one of the two All Church Prayer meetings already scheduled.

You can find these on Church Center App to make this a matter of prayer. Until then, please join us in prayer so God will be glorified by our response.

[36 : 44] In Christ service, the elders of 4th Memorial Church. Amen. Thank you, David. I want to, at this time, I think it's good for you to hear from Pastor Eric.

And so, if I could have us sit down at this time and if I could invite Brooke and Eric, and this is the time that's going to be facilitated by Pastor Jay, and we're just going to have a quick Q&A; time just to help provide a little color to this very black and white announcement.

And so... Thank you.

It's a bit of news, amen. As a staff, as elders, we've had opportunity to be aware and process this news for about five months.

So, at this point, we're excited, but I'm sure for some of you, it's a bit, like, kind of shocking. So, really the intent of hearing from both Eric, Brooke, and then also from Scott is just to give you all a chance, really, to process a bit and to try to bring our body up to speed so that we can understand and really celebrate what the Lord is doing.

[38 : 39] Amen. So, first, I'd love to hear Eric... I planted a church. It's one of the hardest things I've ever done.

And yet the Lord is calling you to do this. I would love to hear, maybe share with us how it is the Lord has been working in your heart, really just to bring you to this place to be willing to do this.

Yeah. I've been at 4th and more for seven years now, and it has been such a blessing for both of us. And growing as a pastor, growing in all the things required to do ministry, and gained a lot of experience and a lot of wisdom from a lot of you all and men over those seven years that have poured into me and disciplined me and showed me more accurately how to do things and how to be a man of God that is in the church.

And one of the areas that I've grown the most in, I would say, and just really been benefited by others helping me in this, is the gift of teaching and preaching. And that's one of the big things that led to this decision, was the Lord revealing to me this is a way that he's calling me to serve him and to proclaim the gospel.

And that gift and that growing in that has combined with, over the last few years I'd say specifically, a really big change of heart in me to see the gospel, not just enacted in the church but received for the first time, and gospel growth and conversions, organic conversion, and just the need for the gospel to go.

[40 : 29] And I've been inspired by others in our church, like I just mentioned Danny and the house child and others that are committed to missions and just seeing their commitment to see the gospel go forward at all costs.

And God has grown that desire in me the last couple of years. And that coupled with, I think, the ways in which he's gifted and called me to do ministry and to preach and to teach and lead has all come to a head just with church planning seems like the natural outflow of these things.

And it was just a little under a year ago that we went to, as a staff, we went to the gospel collision conference in the Indianapolis. And while they're Scott and I, I pulled them along, I don't know the key, any of my intentions, but I pulled them along.

There was a breakout on church planning with Christ at the center. And we got to just sit and listen to church planters and hear their stories. And I walked out just going, that's it.

That's what I think the Lord is calling me to. And I had a real passion after hearing that and pulled Scott aside then and said, Scott, I think I want to be one of these guys.

[41 : 38] Wait, back up. That's not actually how the conversation went. No, actually, you're right. There's a detail there that I don't know why I left out.

But as we walked out of that con out of that session, Scott looked at me first and I was feeling the conviction to tell Scott this. And I was about to and Scott looked at me first. This is true.

And he said, Eric, do you think that the Lord would ever call you to plant a church? And then I responded with, it's funny you asked that. And so a combination of all of those things, I think the Lord's really been intentionally preparing me for this.

And then there's three numbers that in the last six months that I've done a lot of research that have just only added to this conviction. Three numbers that I want to share with you. The first is the number three.

And that's the number of churches that a hundred churches has to plant in order just to sustain a church presence. So for every hundred churches, they have to plant three in order to sustain three dying churches in a year.

[42 : 44] But we know the number must be higher so that we can be proactive in planting more churches to replace not just those that are going to die, but to increase the church presence in whatever city it may be.

And that's an annual figure. That's an annual figure. Three per year. Three churches that a hundred will die every year. And we need to plant three to replace them and more if we want to increase the presence. The first number is three.

The second number is ten. And this is a number given to me by one of our elders, Kamash. Ten is the percentage of people in the Spokane area who are in a church.

A Protestant evangelical church on Sunday morning. Ten percent of Spokane is in the Protestant evangelical church on Sunday morning. That leaves 90 percent of all of Spokane that is un-churched.

And the third number I wanted to share is 9,000. Now 9,000 is the net result gain of people in Spokane every year as an average of the last five years.

[43 : 51] In other words, you guys know the market. As all of the people that leave, all the people who are coming here, the net result is 9,000 new people per year right now in Spokane.

It's booming. There's more people coming and all of those statistics together have just only further grounded this need to be about church planting. Yes, overseas to the lost everywhere, but here in Jerusalem, we have a need for more churches, not less.

In the mission of our church to make disciples has been something that I have been able to do here by God's grace. But to continue that on a scale of church planting has been something that God has really been driving deep within me.

And I've had a conviction to do that through the local church, specifically through a church that has loved and supported me. And I've been able to serve. Thanks, Eric. I'd love to hear some, we would love to hear some.

Scott made mention, the elders mentioned about South Hill, Moran Prairie area. How give us sort of the process for how does one determine where to plant a church?

[45 : 06] Yeah, thank you. So upon being affirmed by the elders and then speaking into me and affirming this desire to plant a church and to commit to helping me with the endeavor.

I took a broad look at the greater Spokane area. Cheney, airway heights, north side, valley, even post falls, south side.

And I just did a demographic search and the multiple question I was seeking to answer was this. Which area in Spokane is the greatest gospel need to ensure that a church plant would be addressing that?

The gospel is needed, churches are needed, and what neighborhood, what place has that need? And so as I looked, it was pretty obvious up north there's a great deal of churches that have surfaced in the last five to 10 years.

Good concentration of churches, biblical churches up there. Even in Cheney, airway heights, there's been some newer churches that have developed out there. In the valley, there's a great effort to plant churches there.

- [46 : 11] And it was as if as I was doing my research, God just laid a spotlight on the South Hill. And as many of you may know, there's two zip codes in the South Hill, two areas in the South Hill.
- The first is the 9903 zip code. And that is the Comstock Rockwell area, kind of northwest South Hill. And in this zip code, there are about 9,000 households, which is a lot of people.
- But also in this area, the zip code, there are a number of biblical evangelical churches that have good reach, that are already doing a good work there. And they're all right along 29th.
- But then I looked at the other zip code in the South Hill, which is 99223. And there's 13,000 households. So 4,000 more than the other zip code. It's a much bigger zip code.
- It actually is all the rest of the South Hill and even into the Palouse. And on this zip code, there's 13,000 households. It was staggering to me.
- [47 : 14] The amount of evangelical Protestant churches that we would consider to be in alignment with us in our doctoral statement, our mission and our vision was non-existent. It's just a spotlight.
- The Lord was just shining. This is an area where we need churches. And it just hit me. And I came back to Brooke. We talked about it and then felt the conviction.
- Eric, I loved watching you kind of work through the process. I just impressed with your integrity to really let the need drive where you would plant the church.
- I know there were other areas kind of that you have greater affection for. And yet the Lord has grown your heart for this area. And just as an aside, I will concur.
- When we moved to town, we lived in the Moran Prairie. We lived in Moran Prairie for two years before we moved up north. And when we were looking for a church, we visited about a dozen.
- [48 : 16] And we could not find a good Bible expository preaching church near to our home. And it's probably likely that we would not be here at 4th if there were a church that existed.
- So I would just agree and concur. I love that you're letting the mission and the need drive the location.
- Many of us here have a vested interest, Eric, in not letting you go. Amen. Amongst those at the front of the line are families that you minister to our families, to our kids.
- And what does the next two years look like? And I just appreciate your ministry to my family, Eric.
- We're so blessed by you. Are you going to still continue to love our kids for the next two years?
- [49 : 31] How do you kind of split your efforts in the next couple of years? I'm just going to take the softball and say yes. Yeah.
- The next couple of years are going to be busy. No need to even state that. But for the last seven years, I've been able to really focus and grow as a minister towards youth.
- I've just recently, young adults as well, and that's something that I have absolutely adored, and I will deeply miss being a youth pastor and young adult pastor.
- But for the next two years, I completely intend on continuing to pastor youth and young adults. To see them grow and to know the Lord and to be disciples will be something I will continue to develop and spend full-time capacity on is doing that.

But beyond that also, there's going to be a good deal of work like Scott and David already mentioned, just with the subcommittee of elders and also with the greater elder board to work on vision for the church, the mission of the church, that is to be theological commitments, doctrinal distinctives, an outreach strategy for the Moran Prairie area, what is going to look like to be involved with missions from day one, and to organize the structure of the church and in worship services, and eventually, as God brings and leads and wills to lead a team, to organize a team, a planning, sending team that will make up that first congregation to go and to be active in that community for the mission of the gospel.

[51 : 23] So a lot in the next couple years, but absolutely for the next few years, I still intend to remain faithful to youth and young adults and to see them grow and develop as disciples of Christ.

Also with, if Scott would allow me, hopefully with an intention too, as we look to replace these positions to help guide and be of use in that area to be able to develop the next one or two people behind me to take over these ministries.

Yeah. That's the right answer. Good. We want to hear from Brooke. Amen.

And I know you have a lot to say, Brooke. But in all seriousness, we would love to hear how the Lord's kind of worked in you to bring you to this place of celebrating what the Lord's doing with your family here.

Just give us a little insight, Peake, on how are you feeling about all this, kind of how the Lord got you. Okay. So Eric tells you that it's been over the past couple of years that he's been interested in church planting.

[52 : 37] I would say that this goes back since we were married or before, so seven plus years. And not in like great, like, research.

I'm really thinking about doing this, but it just would come up fairly often in conversation, almost kind of as a dream of something that he would someday like to do.

And so I think that was kind of the Lord's way of preparing me. It takes me a lot longer to process these things than Eric. Eric is much like the go, like you tell him I want to go and jump out of a plane today.

He's like, yeah, let's go. I want to hear about that, you know, like weeks, months in advance, prepare myself. I'm still not going to jump out of the plane, but I like to know about it ahead of time.

So I think that was kind of the Lord's way of preparing me. So by the time that all of this started to become more of a desire and passion to do right now or in the near future.

[53 : 35] And Eric came back from the Gospel Coalition told me everything that happened and basically said, are you on board with this? I was like, and he thought I was going to be so surprised and need time to process it.

And I just said, yeah, there's I've been I've known that this is coming. I can see this coming and growing in you. It's not a surprise to me. And yes, it's weird and scary, but it's nice to have some of these things coming like an area that we're going to and practically be able to start kind of planning and making making plans or thoughts, I guess, about what our family life will look like and holding down the fort at home while Eric's taking on these extra responsibilities.

So yeah, I don't know if that answers your question, but well, I love your response to Brooke, where I know Eric shared with the staff that he was a little nervous to share with you. Like what is Brooke going to think and and and kind of your nonchalant like, well, yeah, that's what the Lord has been doing.

And I just love that. So thank you for sharing a bit, Brooke. Scott, we'd love to hear from you. You shared, obviously, that a healthy sign of spiritual health for any local church is that it would be a reproducing church.

But why now? Yeah, like we just got through COVID. Yeah. What's driving? Yeah. Why is now the right time to plant?

[55 : 08] Yeah, great question. So it's one thing to desire to plant a church. It's another thing, the key component, you can have the location where you want to plant a church, you can have the need.

You can have everything down. You could have the money in the bank to plant a church, but if you don't have this is going to be a real theological statement. If you don't have the guy, you're not planting a church.

And so by God's kindness and grace to us, he has provided for us a young man who feels called by God to do this, who meets the qualifications of an elder, who has impeccable character, who loves the primary role of how does a elder pastor shepherd the primary way by which that person does that is by teaching the word of God.

And that's a passion point for Pastor Eric. Many of you, I think all of us in some ways, this shouldn't, this announcement in some ways shouldn't take us by surprise. Why is that? Because I've had many of you after Pastor Eric would preach, come up to me and say, man, Eric can preach.

And then I'm like, I know, shh, quiet. All that to say, why now?

[56 : 39] Because by God's grace, he's given us the guy and he's given him a passion, a burden. And we are all stewards of our lives and Eric needs to be a steward of his life.

And if this is what God is calling him to, how great of us to participate in that. And we get to be the sending agent of that. So, yeah. Scott, do you have any words for Eric and Brooke?

This is a surprise question. Scott loves surprises, but I mean, do you have any words of encouragement for them? I know you love Eric and Brooke and there's a mutual admiration there.

You know, there'll be days ahead of encouragement, but is there any encouragement that you would want to give this beloved couple today? Yeah. When I came to Spokane, I too participated in a church plant.

And church planting is not for the faint of heart. And what I love, Eric, is you know you have been preparing yourself mentally for what lies ahead.

[57 : 55] And Brooke, I love even hearing you're already thinking about what this means for you to have Eric go into this endeavor.

And so I just, I would just encourage you, as I would encourage others, of love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

And commit your ways to him and let him direct your path and love and don't forget your responsibilities to your family.

It's so sacrificial, it's costly, but don't do that at the sacrifice of your family. Yeah. And I love you too, crazy.

Anyway. Do you have words for us? I mean, how should we respond to this other than a little bit of like shock?

[59 : 03] Yeah. And there's a conflicting emotion of just celebration and burden for the lost. And yet, you know, feeling, I'm so glad it's two years down the road.

So we have some time to prepare emotionally and then strategically internally here. But what are the ways that you would love for us to respond as a body?

And then are there ways that you would prefer us not respond? Yeah. Let me just share with you this. I, we as elders want to lead in this process pretty transparently.

This is really early for this kind of announcement. It would be easier for us to wait a year where we're ready. Although we have all the plans down.

We know what the funding model looks like. We know how the invitations of those who are going to go and be sent with Eric, how that's going to work out. We have the communication plan down.

[60 : 04] It would be far easier to wait until we had every T crossed, every I dotted. And there's a risk in sharing with all of this with you right now. What's the risk is.

And so I want you to hear that this, we recognize this is early. And, but it's also in part a statement of trust. It's a statement of trust to you to say, we trust our congregation well enough that you'll respond well to this.

That you will not allow this early announcement to allow any division in the church. Those who may be sent with Eric are not disloyal to Scott or not loyal to Eric.

Those who may remain here at fourth are not loyal to Scott and disloyal to Eric. We're loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ. Period. Some may go, some may stay.

So with that in mind, unity you have to endeavor to keep. So would you work toward unity and not allow this early announcement to work to divide us somehow?

[61 : 20] That's for a second. What would be unhelpful is this. We're not ready for anyone to say, Eric, I want to go with you.

In fact, please don't say that. That won't be helpful to him. That's not going to be helpful for us. We're not ready for that yet. In January 2023, this coming January, is that 2023?

Okay. In January. That's when we hope to have enough figured out, a funding model, a sending model, who's going to go with Eric, have a way to navigate those waters.

We'll be sharing that with you in January. But right now, all we're asking you to do is pray. So please don't say to me, don't say to Eric anything about going.

And we're not ready for that. And it would be proved to be unhelpful. Eric has a lot of ministry and work to do right here and now, and he doesn't need to manage that yet.

[62 : 25] So that would be unhelpful. And then what would be helpful is to support and encourage Eric. Just let him know you're praying for him. If you would pray for us as elders, me, there's a lot to figure out for forth.

When the day comes that Eric is sent out with a contingency from forth, when that day occurs, the void that that leaves and to backfill that, there's a lot of work to do.

And so if you could pray, the chief reason why we are sharing this with you prematurely now, is to say, would you please commit this to prayer? Would you please do that?

And that is that that would be really helpful. And you can attend those prayer meetings. So that's how I would respond. Not helpful. Don't say about going or don't do that.

Endeavor to keep the unity and pray, please. That's really good, Scott. When I planted it was surprising to me who went and who didn't go.

[63 : 34] And because there was a call to pray and there are folks here today that you may think, well, I'm in. Well, you need to pray about it. Yeah. And the Lord may call you to stay. There's some of you like I would never leave for it.

And the Lord may call you to go. And so we have to bathe all of this in prayer and that's going to take time. Yeah. And so I just appreciate that we're seeking the Lord on this and we're in this together.

Amen. Amen. So thank you, Eric, Brooke, Scott. Yeah. Yeah. Share something. If I could just share one last thing for us.

Many of you know last week I was in Israel and I was on the sea of Galilee and there was a professor, pastor type person who is leading a devotional thought.

And I shared with you earlier that I can be given. I can be a man who can be given to worry. Well, if you will, there's plenty to worry about here with what has just been shared.

[64 : 37] And so all this last week is I've been in Israel knowing I would come back and share this and we'd be sharing this announcement. I would be preaching this message and and we would be doing this.

And I, the passage was because we're on the sea of Galilee, the context was Jesus calmed the storm. And if you will, prior to Jesus calming the storm on the sea of Galilee, all through the book of Mark, God, Jesus has been doing miracle after miracle.

He's casting out demons. He's healing the lame. He has been performing miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle. Then he calms the sea. And then this is what it says.

And he said to them, his disciples, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? As if to say this, disciples, you knew I could do this.

You should have known this. You, you should have known I could do this. And so as my heart has turned from sadness, knowing what lies ahead to joy, there's still moments for me of great concern.

[65 : 50] But this is what I know. God can do this. God can do this. I don't want it to be said of me. Why are you so afraid, Scott? Eric, why are you so afraid?

Church, why are you so afraid of what lies ahead for all of us? Have you still no faith? No.

Let us be a people of faith who trust the Lord. You put this in front of us and we get to join you in it. What a joy. What a privilege.

So thank you, church. It's at this time to kind of conclude this time. I would like for the elders to come up. We're just going to pray over Eric and Brooke and then be dismissed here shortly.

So if I may have the elders come up forward. I've asked three elders to pray. And Eric and Brooke, can I have you sit here up closer? Yeah. Let's pray together.

[66 : 45] Heavenly Father, while many sitting here, this is the first time they've heard this. And it's a new and different thing for them.

And I just pray for the Holy Spirit to move amongst us and that we would be prepared. We would be anxious. We would be excited.

All of those emotions that go along with it. But more than that, Father, I pray for Eric and Brooke now. Lord, this is the man.

All of us are unanimous on the board about this. This is our man. And for Brooke, Father, this is his support. And to hear her say, yeah, let's go for it.

Wow. That's exciting. We're looking forward to what you're going to do, Lord. It's going to be an exciting time. It's going to be a scary time.

[67 : 42] And as God has shared, yes, there are many unanswered things. There's lots we have to do in the next two years. But, Father, it's yours, not ours.

We have to merely follow your lead, Father. And that's what we ask for. We ask for a real steadfastness. We are grateful for Eric to step into those shoes that you've called him to step into.

And just what an exciting time to see what you're going to do and how powerfully you're going to do it. Spokane is yours, Lord. We need to move out into Spokane.

We need to spread your word. We need to plant churches. For many of us on the board, this was kind of a, do we want to do this?

But Lord, we are convinced now, together, that this is what we need to do. Eric is the man, and we just pray that you would provide each step and each answer as we move along this way.

[68 : 53] You're a great God. We have nothing but confidence that you will do this in your time and your way. We thank you for what's going to happen.

It's in the name of the Lord that we pray. Father God, I want to thank you for him, Brooke and Eric. Thank you that many years ago you brought them together.

I pray right now for them personally that you would strengthen their relationship, that you would deepen their family commitment. And Lord, as they prepare in these next two years, Lord, all the details that some will be overwhelming in the sense of how do we do this?

Lord, I thank you that your word says very clearly, trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Lean not on your own understanding in all of your ways. Acknowledge him, and you will direct their path.

You will guide them in the way of wisdom. Thank you, Father, for that promise. I pray that for our congregation too, our family here at the church, that we would trust you, that we would ask good questions, and then we would rely upon you to give us clear biblical and Godly answers from your sovereign hand.

[70 : 04] Right now, even we don't know any of the people there. Lord, thank you that you are in preparation now for those who will come to Christ.

Use this family, those that will go with them as instruments of the gospel of the good news, and that we would rejoice in the years to come of hearing those who the angels will rejoice in.

We give you praise in Jesus' name. Yes, Lord God, we agree with these prayers, and we are so thankful for Eric and Brooke and their family.

What a blessing they've been to us as individuals and us as a church. We thank you for their willingness to follow you as they step out in faith.

Thinking about all the things that are going to be happening over the next couple of years, so many things have to come together, and it's going to be a real joy to see forth come together in prayer, to pray, and to ask you for the things that need to happen.

[71 : 12] But this morning, my biggest prayer for Eric and Brooke is that the next two years wouldn't just be about the busyness of starting this new church, but it would be about them finding the rest in you, their joy, their contentment in you, their purpose in you alone.

As they consider who you are to them, all of your amazing attributes, who you are as their God, and most of all what you've done through your son Jesus, that they would rest in that, and that they would get their passion from the relationship with you.

What a vision it is to dream of seeing a new church, new believers brought in, and people brought to maturity through your spirit, and just energize them with this, but have them rest in you, I pray.

Again, we thank you for this family. It's a lot of different emotions going on, but we all trust you with our emotions, and we trust you for the future.

And in your son's name we pray. Amen. KFW priest