

DS Report to the Crossroads District Conference

June 25, 2022

Praise God from whom all blessings flow! What a great time to be alive and serving in the Kingdom of God. I invite you to join me in looking at the state of the Crossroads District as our team gathers today. These unprecedented times have provided us with unparalleled opportunities to serve our unsurpassed Savior and King!

- It's been a great year with in-person worship increasing by 23% over last conference year to climb back above the 10,000 mark (10,494 compared to 8514 last year).
- Professions of faith (853/579, up 47%) and baptisms (490/397, up 23%) are back on track to surpass pre-pandemic levels.
- Your USF contributions reached 97% of assessments this year, our strongest participation in recent history. Thank you to every leader who stepped up in faith to pursue the Great Commission in the Spirit of the Great Commandment. God is on the move!

LOOKING BACK:

NEXT LEVEL

Dr. Chris Williams and his team of instructors and coaches ran our first session of NEXT Level last fall with six churches participating. This is a new approach to helping churches address key issues that help them move to the next level in their ministries. We will be offering another session this fall and I encourage your church to take advantage of this opportunity!

EXPONENTIAL

With the Heartland Gathering in the same month, we still had a good delegation (more than 20 leaders) from our district who participated in the Orlando Exponential Conference. We joined in with over 500 Wesleyans who prioritized this church planting event. We anticipate an even stronger delegation next year.

THE HEARTLAND GATHERING

We shared a wonderful retreat with pastors, spouses, and their families in Pigeon Forge with the other three districts of the Heartland Region. The event was on point and deeply appreciated. Many of those attending also participated in the Thrive matching grant initiative. Plans are underway for our next Heartland Region gathering in 2024. We will also be promoting the denomination's Gathering in Orlando, January 4-7, 2023.

PRAYER GATHERINGS

Building off of the 21 Days of Prayer, each month this spring, usually on the 2nd Sunday, at 6 p.m., one of our district churches has hosted a prayer gathering for area churches. We launched in Huntington at Hope Rising in January. We were hosted by Circle of Hope (Noblesville campus) in February, hosted by Delphi Wesleyan in March, and then circled back to The River Church for April. We gathered at Carmel Amistad in May, and, most recently, we were hosted by South Bend Sonlight Church in June. We will continue to follow up "21 Days of Prayer" with three area gatherings this fall and another three gatherings next spring.

FRIDAY FELLOWSHIPS

Sherry and I have continued to offer an opportunity each month for pastors and spouses to gather in our home over a casual meal with lots of laughter, some singing, and special times of prayer. It is a blessing to be able to offer this time of encouragement.

CHURCH PLANTS

This year, we are celebrating Pastor Andy Riemersma at Westfield ONE Church and Pastor Jerome Bell at Autumn Hills Church in Pendleton. During the past 5 years, we've partnered to launch 15 new Kingdom communities. Some of those even launched during the pandemic. Average attendance in these congregations grew by an average of 42%. Lives are being transformed by the Gospel in these ministries that didn't even exist five years ago. Thank you for prioritizing our district's support for new Kingdom communities!

CIRCUIT RIDERS

Dr. David Smith and Dr. Jim Lo stepped into new positions with our district team last year bringing their unique ministry focus on the Word and prayer to nearly 40 of our local churches. We are deeply grateful for their ministry impact last year and look forward to their ministry again this conference year.

LOOKING AROUND:

Churches are thriving. Churches are closing. I'm reminded of Charles Dickens' opening lines in *The Tale of Two Cities*:

*"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness,
it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."*

Leaders live for moments like this. You can either cower in the confusion and cacophony of our culture or you can set a new course through uncharted waters and discover boundless opportunities awaiting the brave. We are called to prevail!

Churches, large and small, are experiencing a wave of previously unchurched guests who are desperately seeking for answers and for hope. We've seen record attendance in several of our churches in the past few months. These are not days for despair. These are days to double down and passionately pursue the mission.

This has also been a year of transition. We grieved the loss of Pastor Ben Capshaw who died tragically last summer. Thank you for your generous support (over \$80,000) to Amanda and their boys.

Dr. David Anderson, Rev. Mark Atkinson, and Rev. Steve Colter retired from full-time pastoral ministry, but they won't be slowing down much. To date, we have 11 churches with pastoral leadership transitions heading into this conference year.

There is also a generational shift underway in our district. When I was first elected to serve as your DS for the new Crossroads District in 2016, approximately 50% of the pastors were older than I. If re-elected and blessed by God to serve you for the next several years, many of these pastors will have retired. They will have handed the baton to next-generation leaders. These will not always be easy transitions, so please join me in praying for wisdom and unity.

Thank you for praying for our General Conference last month. Vital conversations were needed. Significant decisions were made. Overall, there was a good spirit of unity and a clear desire for God to be glorified as we march forward together.

LOOKING AHEAD:

1) LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This conference we celebrated our largest class of candidates ordained last evening, June 24. Special thanks to Dr. Chris Williams and Rev. Carla Working for their excellent leadership with our ministerial development team. We will offer the Wesleyan Church History and Discipline class again this fall tuition-free for our ministerial students.

MY GOAL: To meet one-on-one with every lead pastor for coaching with a special focus on their vision for multiplication and to have every pastor preach at least once on answering the call (including sharing their own call) to the equipping ministries of Ephesians 4. The first anticipated outcome is that 100 or more people will identify and respond positively to God's call. The second anticipated outcome is that every pastor will identify two emerging leaders they will be mentoring in the coming year.

2) CHURCH REVITALIZATION

While we have thriving churches of all sizes across our district, far too many of our congregations are stuck. One positive of the pandemic is that it forced us to address lingering complacency and, even apathy. We will offer the NEXT Level Church seminar again this fall with follow-up coaching and \$1000 outreach grants available for each participating church.

MY GOAL: To recruit 10 pastors to bring 3 or more lay people to participate in the training event, complete their coaching, and implement their outreach initiative. The anticipated outcome is that we will see these churches accelerate their growth trajectory in worship and with a 10% increase in baptisms over the previous year.

3) CHURCH MULTIPLICATION

By the grace of God, we've launched 15 new congregations in the past 5 years but now is not the time to be content when we still have 3 million unreached people in our mission field. Gary, Hammond, Crown Point, Valparaiso, LaPorte, Michigan City, Mishawaka, Goshen, Angola, Kendallville, Auburn, West Lafayette, Peru, Alexandria, and dozens of neighborhoods in Indianapolis are still without the transforming impact of a new Wesleyan church planted to make disciples and multiply.

The problem is not a lack of opportunities or resources. The missing ingredient is Kingdom entrepreneurs who will step out in faith to launch these new mission endeavors. While we may occasionally recruit free agents, the most effective path forward is demonstrated by Gas City Eastview sending out Aldean and Jessie Pablo, and Trinity Church sending out Andy and Leanza Riemersma. The early church in Antioch modeled this for us in Acts 13 and it is still the best strategy today.

MY GOAL: To preach on church multiplication in every church visit this coming year, to profile these generous churches and courageous leaders, and to call for ministers and marketplace leaders to take steps of faith to launch new Kingdom communities. Ultimately, lead pastors are the best multipliers and recruiters. The anticipated outcome is at least 10 leaders who have signed up this year for church planter assessments and are open to planting with us here in Indiana. The second anticipated outcome is that every pastor will identify one new place in which their church could partner to plant a new Kingdom community. You'll hear more about our 1-2-3 challenge this afternoon.

THANK YOU!

In closing, let me express my heartfelt gratitude to our Crossroads District Board of Administration for their partnership in this ministry. I am especially indebted to Assistant District Superintendents Rev. Michael Colaw, Rev. Matthew Trexler, and Dr. Chris Williams for their leadership by example. Carla Working, Michael Wood, and Seth Bye deserve the credit for anything that goes right from our district office.

Our treasurer, Rev. Craig Thurmon, and secretary, Rev. Carol Schenck, have gone above and beyond to serve us all so well. I want to say special thank you to Carol who has served through the transition and formation from two districts into the Crossroads District. You will be missed in your capacity as district secretary, but we celebrate your continued ministry with Dr. Schenck at Circle of Hope.

Sherry has been untiring in her support, especially in our Friday Fellowships, all while completing her Doctor of Business Administration degree at Indiana Wesleyan University and leading the Shared Accounting Services team at HQ. She is my hero!

Thank you for allowing me the incredible privilege of serving the Crossroads District. I believe that our best days are just ahead as we pray, dream, and work together to see lives, churches, and communities #MadeNew to the glory of God.

Your servant in Christ,

Mark Gorveatte