

Today's sermon is going to be a bit different than a usual Sunday—not really a sermon at all

- = **Annual Reporting (2012 Missional Faithfulness Reporting)** (TITLE SLIDE)
- If you are here visiting, we are so glad to have you, just keep that in mind:
- You are not really getting a sense of our regular Sunday preaching—it will be of a different nature, tone, tenor and topic and it will be longer than usual, and we will not have as much time for musical praise and worship after
- Maybe you will want to come back again... maybe not (**although you will learn a ton about Reality today**)

Today is a family affair

- For those of us that **call Reality home** and are **committed** to:
  - **Christ, this church, each other** and the **mission** we are called to

We'll be talking about that mission and **trying to assess** our **degree of faithfulness** to it

- We're taking our cue from **Acts 14:27** where Paul and Barnabas were with the church in Antioch the text says: "**They gathered the church together and reported all that God had done**"
- In that spirit:
  - The elders have asked me to give a sort of **State of the Union** address
  - **Reveal** where we are as a church in terms of **measurable biblical practices**
  - **Report** what God has done in the last year or so
    - These things will give us much to **rejoice about** and be **thankful for**—in light of God's grace
    - As well as **expose** some areas where we **need to grow**—by God's grace
  - We will also talk a little bit about where we are going (**vision—both short and long-term**)
    - We will talk more about vision and mission (Who we are, where we are going and how we'll get there) over the next few weeks (I am scheduled to teach those weeks)

But, today we'll concentrate on "**reporting** (and rejoicing in) **all that God has done**"

**The goal is:**

- That those of us who call Reality home, will get a better sense of **what we have been doing**, how the **mission to make disciples** is progressing, **whether or not we are being faithful**, and **what is to come**
- **In order that:** **We can more confidently commit ourselves to one another as a local church and the mutual mission we have been called to by Christ for His glory**

**Read Psalm 105:1-6 (NLT) and pray**

Let's start by reminding ourselves of **what a local church is** and **what a local church ought to be doing**

- First, we realize there is actually only **one church**—The church universal (The Bride of Christ)
- Then you have **local gatherings—localized expressions** of that one universal church
- You also have the **church gathered** and the **church scattered** (worship and mission) (it is not a building)
- **The local church is:** A connected, worshipping community of redeemed sinners, saved by Christ through grace, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit for mission, and existing for the pleasure of the Father
- **The local church ought to:** Join with Christ in the work of **making disciples** by every means possible
- The local church has leaders but is not merely the leaders—not less than it's leaders (Cf. **The Priesthood of the Saints**)
- Doing away with the us, them (laity/clergy) mentality
- We have a sort of **specialized local church**—We are **1 church in 3 locations** (SB, Carp, Ventura)
  - All **metrics** given encompass the 3 campuses as 1 church (unless otherwise noted)

Being a local church, we desperately want to be **faithful to Jesus**—who is the Head, Chief Leader, Senior Pastor of the Church, source and centerpiece of our lives together, the reason we gather and scatter

- We want to be faithful with our resources (gifts, talents, time, \$, etc)
- We want to be faithful in accomplishing **with** Christ **what** Christ intends to accomplish **in** the world **through** His Church **for** His glory

Here are some biblical understandings of the local church and accompanying metrics that help us ascertain what and how we are doing in the mission:

### In a local church—People ought to be getting **saved and baptized**

- **The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved** (Acts 2:47)
- In the last 2 years we have baptized **407** people! **(GRAPHIC)**
- **Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name goes all the glory for your unfailing love and faithfulness.** (Psalm 115:1)

### In a local church—People ought to **gather together en masse** to worship

- **All those who had believed were together... and day by day continuing with one mind in the Temple** (Acts 2:44<sup>a</sup> & 46<sup>a</sup>)
- **Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together,** as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Hebrew 10:24-25)
- Our normal Sunday attendance (adults and children) is **2,725 (GRAPHIC)**
- **“Megachurches account for less than one-half of one percent of all churches in America”<sup>1</sup>**

### In a local church—People ought to **gather in small groups** throughout the week

- **And breaking bread from house to house they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart** (Acts 2:46<sup>b</sup>)
- As our church gets larger, it also has to get smaller to maintain health.
- We have **42** community groups with **76** trained leaders and **1,683** people registered **(74%) (GRAPHIC)**
- Here is an area we need to grow
  - If you do the math that makes each group size about 40 (Our goal is 10)
  - We need to recruit and train more leaders this year
  - We need to work on being committed to our community groups for doing life (dropouts)
- **Deep, connected, God-ordained, loving relationships are vital to us—we are relational**

### In a local church—People ought to give themselves to **the study of Scripture**

- **And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching** (Acts 2:42)
- We have offered lots of Bible studies throughout the year for children, youth, men and women
- **Over 1,000 people have participated in the last 2 years (GRAPHIC)**
  - This year (in addition to the Bible study and preaching at our regular gatherings) you could have studied:
    - **James, John, Romans, Daniel, Esther, Genesis, The Patriarchs, The Historical Books, an overview of the OT**
    - We offered an **“Introduction to Theology”** course for our H. Schoolers that dealt with things like justification, sanctification, eschatology, apologetics, etc
    - We spent time teaching our **Jr. Highers** about Biblical Creationism
    - Our kids learned about int'l missions in **VBS** this summer: Persecution, Bible translation, Medical missions and missionary work in general (all from Scripture)
- **We are committed to the study of Scripture—we are a learning community—we are theological**

<sup>1</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Seven Updated Trends on Megachurches in America*, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/seven-updated-trends-on-megachurches-in-america-81860/> (January 2013).

## In a local church—People ought to be praying together

- These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14; Cf. 2:42)
- We have (on average) about **60 prayer meetings a month across our 3 campuses** with about **400** people participating (GRAPHIC)
- These include meetings to pray for:
  - Our youth
  - Our community
  - Our church
  - The poor and oppressed in our community
  - Our missionaries and the nations
  - The evangelization of Muslims
  - The Spanish speaking community (and more)
- Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

## In a local church—People ought to be serving together to accomplish mission

- God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- We have more than **950 volunteer positions** filled by more than **760 different people!** About **1 in 3** adults who attend on a Sunday serve at Reality (GRAPHIC)
- From setting up, to teaching our youth and children, to praying for and laying hands on people, to hospitality and cleaning, to leading us in worship, to caring for people and resources
  - We are so thankful!!! Room to grow: we need more
  - Read Psalm 134 as a blessing over those who serve in the house of the Lord
- This is important: The main place we expect each other to be serving Christ is not in the church gathering, but rather when the church is scattering (Monday through Saturday)
- Cf. *Missio Christi*
  - As the Father has sent me, I also send you. (Jesus in John 20:21)
  - We are a sent people—we live life on mission with Jesus—we are missional

## In a local church—People ought to be getting trained, organized and sent to live fruitful lives of mission (both locally and globally)

- Christ gave (leaders in the church) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (Ephesians 4:11-12)
- [The church] fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them and sent them out. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went (Acts 13:3-4)
- In the last year we have trained **986 people** for faithful on mission living (GRAPHIC)
- This training includes:
  - Community Group Leaders
  - Long, medium and short-term missionaries
  - A senders school (getting missionaries on the field and caring for them)
  - Perspectives on the world Christian movement
  - Training and mobilizing for local mission
  - Education and equipping in issues like Islam and Human Trafficking
  - Internships that produce leaders
  - Worship ministry training (The Kiln)
  - Youth and kids leaders
  - Church planters
- With regards to international mission in particular (2012)
  - Short-Term Missionaries (6 mos. or less) = **12**
  - Medium-Term Missionaries (1-2 years) = **2**
  - Long-Term Missionaries = **20** (supported)
    - (INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS GRAPHIC)
    - In 2012 we sent or supported missionaries in these places: Mexico, Nepal, Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Venezuela, Tanzania, Australia, Haiti, Thailand, Japan, China, Ethiopia, Egypt, South Africa, Israel, Turkey, Norway, England, France, Indonesia
  - Long-Term is where we are focusing (Cf. Ron and Merrill and Teresa in South America)
    - In our 10 years we have sent out and still support 11
    - We are currently preparing **11 more to go in 2013** (double!!)
    - Places like: Nepal, Pakistan, Ethiopia, N. Africa, Turkey and Mexico

- We are committed to going to the nations to fulfill the Great Commission
- Our God is a missionary God who came to us in Christ to save us—we must be a missionary people that go to others with the Good News of Christ that they might be saved

### A local church ought to be reproducing

- That is the story of the book of Acts and the Church throughout history
- **Church Birthing—Reality is a small church planting movement**
- Our goal is not to plant **many** churches—but rather **healthy** churches **(GRAPHIC)**
  - **Reality LA**
    - Born January 22, 2006
    - One of the largest churches in LA
    - Flourishing
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> campus this year
  - **Reality Stockton**
    - Born September 2, 2007
    - Doing very well
    - Vision to reach whole city
    - Launched another church in Lodi called Remedy
  - **Reality London**
    - Born August 23, 2009
    - From Reality LA
    - Closing this year
  - **Reality SF**
    - Born January 10, 2010
    - Possible the largest protestant church in SF
    - Flourishing “Where churches go to die”
    - Vision to plant churches throughout the City
  - **Reality Boston**
    - Born September 16, 2012
    - Just a few months old
    - Doing very well
    - Developing leaders
    - Least churchd portion of US
    - Hard Work

### In a local church—People ought to be giving generously to the Lord and pooling resources in order to accomplish mission

- And those who believed were together and had all things in common (Acts 2:44)
- Reality seeks to be above reproach in our stewardship of God's financial resources given by the local church. We maintain an open book policy, have a CPA on staff full time, and choose to be annually reviewed according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) by an independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- “We have worked with many, many churches across the country, and after reviewing Reality’s financials, both their financial strength and Kingdom focus made us confident and eager to partner with them financially in ministry. As a bank serving churches and ministries across the country, we are blessed to be a part of what God is doing at Reality.” - Chris Dimond, Senior Vice President, Cass Commercial Bank
- **Our giving is motivated by Scripture and the Gospel**
  - Scripture = Over 2,000 references
  - Gospel = We respond with generosity to the generous grace of God in Christ
  - You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty He could make you rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- **You guys have done very well in this area!**
  - Reality is a generous church
  - You understand that since we have been given everything in Christ—we are free to give much away

- **Our giving in tithes and offerings this year totaled \$4.9 million (GRAPHIC)**
  - That is up 9% from last year (from 4.5 million)
    - **Comparison:** Recent available data shows churches our size being up 5%<sup>2</sup> (in 2010)
  - **85% of us gave in 2012 (GRAPHIC)**
    - Astounding!
  - **Average weekly giving per adult in attendance= \$41.54**
    - **Comparison:** Average for churches our size = \$26.77<sup>3</sup> (in 2010)
    - **We are a generous church—because we get that God, in Christ, has been very generous with us!**
- **By campus comparison: (GRAPHIC)**
  - The Carpinteria Campus makes up **14%** of our total attendance and gives **19.7%** of our total income
  - The Ventura Campus makes up **47%** of our total attendance and gives **45%** of our total income
  - The Santa Barbara Campus makes up **38.5%** of our total attendance and gives **21%** of our total income
    - The remaining 14% (to 100%) was given to mission, church planting, the RVTA building and disciple making events
    - **Carp** = more than their share
    - **Ventura** = about their share
    - **Santa Barbara** = less than their share
      - Partially demographics (lots of college students), partially a normal new campus growth pattern and matter of discipleship
- **Where is that money going?**
  - We try to model biblical faithful giving and so we gave away **17.3%** in 2012 (GRAPHIC)
  - Money that we send outside our four walls
    - = Church plants; helping other churches; local and int'l missions; benevolence; etc
    - **Comparison:** The average church our size gave away **13.1%**<sup>4</sup> (in 2010)

**(GRAPHIC—pie chart)**

Disciple Making Events & Outreaches	8.5%
Church Birthing & Int'l Mission	11.3%
Operations	12.1%
Facilities	25.7%
Personnel	42.5%

★ We are **above average (13.1%) on what we invest beyond** our local church and we are **below average (45%) in what we spend on personnel** (Good, godly stewardship)

Our goal is to steward God's resources according to the Spirit's leading and with the wisdom He supplies.

- **We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps. (Proverbs 16:9)**

We can look at our plan **on a weekly scale** to give a very clear picture for how much is given per adult each week in tithes and offerings and how Reality invests those funds in the Kingdom.

**(GRAPHIC)**

**When you give \$40 at Reality, how do we invest it in the Kingdom?**

<b>Average Giving Per Adult</b>	\$41.50
<b>Church Costs</b> <i>Local church staff, mission and operations</i>	\$21.50
<b>Facilities Costs</b> <i>Property payment and maintenance at all facilities</i>	\$10.25

<sup>2</sup> Kent E. Fillinger, *Is the Church in a Recession*, <http://christianstandard.com/2011/05/is-the-church-in-a-recession/> (January 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**Church Birthing** \$2.75

*Investments in new Realities and other churches*

**Mission** \$3.75

*Investments in local and int'l gospel-centered projects*

**Margin** \$3.25

*Positive margin each week allows us to maintain sufficient reserves and be prepared for any unexpected opportunities God may provide*

- As **stewards** of God's resources, we make **adjustments to the plan each quarter** based on recent trends in giving and expenses.
- Since income and expenses vary month to month, this helps us to make sure we don't spend more than we receive.
- The numbers shown here reflect **how we plan to operate in 2013** based on what happened in 2012.
  
- **Our elders agree that 2012 was just about the most challenging year we have ever had as a church**
  - Growth and change issues
  - Staff issues (illness; personal challenges)
  - Dissension and divisiveness in the body (leadership guilty too)
  - Spiritual attack of all sorts (feels like 10 years ago)
  
- **These challenges, as I said, are reflected in our giving patterns**
  - In 2012 we had **760 new** givers
  - But we had **1,166** people that gave in 2011 and not in 2012
  - Net loss of **406** givers
    - **Over that last year we had a lot of people leave our church and a lot of people come to our church**
    - **Our attendance ended up the same (2011 to 2012)**
  - And yet, we are still **up 9%** in giving over all
    - The grace of God!
  - We got to where we needed to be financially, but it was turbulent
    - In 2012, half of the year (6 of 12 months) we were **in the red** with **less giving than expense**.
      - October and November were especially difficult having used up a lot of our reserve earlier in the year.
      - But, God really did a miracle in the last 2 weeks of December through a handful of one-time large gifts to not only make, but exceed, our annual budget.
      - Praise God for the generosity of His people! **(But there were some scary times)**
    - Analogy from our Pastor for Finance and Operations: *In the past our financial picture has looked like a realist painting as a year progressed. Clear, precise, predictable—beautiful. This year was like an impressionistic painting: Up close it looked messy, disheveled and didn't always make sense. But, at the end when you step back, it is beautiful!*
      - God provided, He just did it in a different way this year, with some different people—lots of change
      - The elders are thankful that a couple of years ago through prayer and fasting the Lord had told us to **live within our means**... not to look for large increases in income. We did so, and it has worked out well.
      - **Cf. Coffee decision**

## The turbulent financial picture, the people leaving, the spiritual warfare... all got the Elders praying hard

- When we looked at the financial challenges we were quick to realize that finances are never the real issue—they are symptomatic
- We began to ask what the causes may be
- We looked first to ourselves as primary leaders
  - Where have we failed?
  - And we looked at other factors
  - We realized these 4 things played a role: (least to most important)
    - 1. Macro economic trends
    - 2. Demographic changes at Reality
    - 3. A loss of confidence in Reality by some
    - 4. Sin among the leadership
      - All a factor— and we are addressing all 4
        - 1. Living within means
        - 2. Making efforts to better understand who calls Reality home
        - 3. Re-asserting our values and reporting our work
        - 4. Repenting of roots of bitterness

## With all of this in mind and looking back on what God, by His grace and for His glory, has done over the last year, we are very thankful and very excited about 2013 and beyond.

- We are convinced that Reality's best days are ahead—but there is much prayer and work to be done
- We still need to grow in serving, giving, prayer and mission...

## Here are our commitments for 2013:

- Making Disciples
- Growing Deeper in Christ
- Building Reality for the Long-Term
- Seeking the Person of the Holy Spirit

## Let me explain a bit:

### We have recommitted ourselves to giving CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Because:**
- We have felt the real burden about that day that we will stand before the Lord and give and answer for how we have fulfilled the Great Commission—**To make disciples**
- We are also sensing a call to **build for the long-term**—to make decisions now that set our church up for health and flourishing **10 years from now... for our children** (at year 20)
- We also feel called to **lead the church deeper** at this time and not merely wider
  - The shift from “**To expose and explain Jesus to as many people as possible**” to “**Enjoy Jesus together and help others do the same**”
    - Both are true (we will explain the latter over the next couple of weeks)—but we feel called to concentrate on deeper right now (over wider)
    - It involves a subtle articulation: We are still wanting to get tell the whole world, but we feel a call settle into a deeper life in the midst of it

## All of this requires a fresh and intense commitment by leadership to seeking the Person of the Holy Spirit

- How do we: lead deeper; make true disciples; build for the long-term?
- Christ knows (as the head of the church) and the Spirit reveals **the mind of Christ** to us and **leads the Church in mission**
- It also, requires that the whole church give new attention to the Holy Spirit in seeking to go deeper and be more faithful

**Our 2103 Sunday Preaching Schedule reflects our commitment to discipleship, going deeper, building for the long-term and the Person of the Holy Spirit**

- **February:** Mission and Vision Reporting and Exploration (me)
- **March:** Celebration and Exegesis of the Resurrection (Lazo)
- **March 31:** The Celebration (Easter) (me)
- **April-May:** Ephesians 5:1-18 (Lazo)
- **June-August:** Summer of the Spirit (With mid-week practicum?) (me)
- **September 8:** Reality Turns 10!
- **September-November:** Ephesians 5 & 6 (Singleness, Marriage, Family and Work with accompanying one day seminars) (unclear)
- **December:** Advent (unclear)

This **preaching plan is evidential** of how we are endeavoring to **go deeper, make disciples, build for the long term** and give careful attention to **the Person of the Holy Spirit**:

- Taking ample time on understanding Vision and Mission
- Spending the whole month of March celebrating and learning about of the Resurrection
- Going deeper on Easter
- Spending the whole summer diving into the Holy Spirit
- Using Autumn to learn about and cultivate faithfulness in singleness, marriage, parenting and the work place
- Celebrating the Advent during the whole month of December
  - **(Teaching shared between Chris Lazo and myself... maybe... if the Lord wills it)**

***Well Reality,***

***In many markers we are an above average church. That is reason to rejoice—God's grace is on us.***

***All the glory to God! Thank you Jesus!***

***But, we should not settle there because the standard of comparison is sub-standard—it's the American Church.***

***Our standard of comparison must be Scripture and the Gospel of Jesus Christ Himself!***

***Therefore, by God's grace and for God's glory, we must allow the Holy Spirit to take us further still.***

***But thus far, good job Reality. We are proud of you.***

**Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name goes all the glory for your unfailing love and faithfulness. (Ps. 115:1)**

**Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare His praise in the coastlands! (Isaiah 43:12)**