



LEAD PASTOR REPORT

Dr. Paul Conway | Lead Pastor

“And the Word of the Lord came to him” 1 Kings 17:2



ASSEMBLY of GOD
Lowell

What is the difference between our words vs. Gods? What difference does it make? I think of this often. Recently I was reflecting on my father. He always has a way of speaking into my life for what it could be rather than what it was or is. Think about the way our heavenly father speaks. He has a way of speaking above the fray of our low level views or high level fears and uses his words to take us into a place of possibility and hope we never could have imagined for ourselves. In the book of Isaiah God says to us *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* There comes a moment in our lives where we need to understand God, his Spirit and his word is not a philosophy or positive mental attitude we buy into or synthesize into our mentality but a declaration that dares us to act. His word is a firm established truth that invites us to step out and stand up in trust rather than warm up or wait for enough evidence before we move.

The leadership of this church has chosen to be a community that centers around the Word of God. It is seen in the curriculum our children learn and the verses they memorize. We find it in the messages that follow the outlines of scripture and books rather than tagging verses to creative schemes and themes. We hear it in the ministries of Grief Share or Celebrate Recovery as the remedy to restoration and recovery. All of the steps took in 2017 were on the ground of his word. We sensed God leading our community in directions of action. There was no means or manpower to accomplish it, but we stepped out none-the-less. God’s word to Joshua is fitting for us as we celebrate the past and ponder the future of 2018. *“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go”* Joshua 1:9. Let’s step into 2018 with the confidence of 2017’s miracles! Let’s lean into obedience and resist the wind of fear and obstacles with trust and triumph. Let’s allow the “Word of the Lord” to be our marching orders for all the possibilities of hope and rise above the low level fears and high pinnacles of problems soaring above them all in the confidence that God’s word is above it all. Below are some sections with words I believe God would wish us to embrace for 2018.



SERVE: *“If you find the joy of serving, you will never want to be served again!”*

In the middle of 2017 we experienced a serving crisis. There were not volunteers for new ministries and barely enough to keep the ones we had going forward. A precious person in our community came up to me and said “Pastor, I feel like I have from word of God for you?” They began to explain that the serving problem was bad and that they felt God said “It is going to get worse before it gets better.... But it’s going to get better in about

6-8 months.” I am amazed but not surprised that tonight marks eight months since that moment. Recently, we had over 50% of our community receiving invitations to our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. That word was truly a word from God. Friends, There are three things that make Gods kingdom grow or shrink; People who are willing to give of their time treasure and talent or not. Thank you for stepping up to greater places as you become available, generous and strategically responsible for sharing in the excellence of our church! As God has blessed us with growth serving will matter more than ever for empowering Gods kingdom and the gospel. We are asking everyone embrace the rhythm to serve in one service and receive in the other. Bless in one service and be blessed in the other. If you find the joy of serving, you will never want to be served again!”

GROW: *“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” Acts 2:47*

We’ve grown! In 2016 our average attendance was 285. In 2017 it was 326. Church growth models say you need three times the visitors as attenders to grow by 10%. Pastor Dylan covers this in detail in his report but its worth noting here that we experienced a 14% growth rate with only 1/3 the flow of traffic necessary. I believe we are an amazing community and our retention and growth rate backs that statement up. This is to your credit. Thank you for being like Jesus and welcoming those visiting our church. They could go anywhere they want. It’s because of you they have chosen to stay.



BUILD: *“Our largest challenge from a facility point of view is the limitation of large multi-purpose gathering space”*

Renovations continued in 2017 as we painted rooms, boosted the class of our foyer with furniture, updated the offices and more. We have allot of ground to cover with 30 years of deferred maintenance. Our church Architect, Glenn Knowles has developed a master plan for the facility available to view in the office upon request. The board and I have come to the conclusion that growth in people will result in financial strength for such endeavors. Until that time we will continue to maximize our space, renovate what we can afford and believe God for revealing the right time to build further. The largest challenge from a facility point of view is the limitation of no large flexible gathering spaces. We have chosen to forego a million dollar addition on the back for carpet and chairs in the sanctuary allowing us to have a large multi-purpose section. Doing this will empower us to hold conferences, banquet for events like honoring local civil servants, celebrate relationships like families with special needs host our own annual volunteer banquet which has outgrown the country club next door and more. As I close this section I ask you might consider hearing the voice of God through his word and my voice in this report. Two things are essential to meeting this need of upkeep, maintenance and renovation, treasure and talent. We need anyone willing to serve, especially those with skilled labor. Equally we need generosity in action. The carpet and chairs alone are in excess of \$34,000. We also have all the lights in the sanctuary directly wired to the fuse box. Our roof has begun to show signs of expiration; the back section of the building has yet to ever receive the furnace in the original building plans from 1987. If each of the 300 attenders gave \$500 to this cause, it would make this renovation a reality. God speaks to this in his word in Exodus. Lets act on this word in faith.

² And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work...

³ And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning,

⁴ so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, ⁵ and said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do." ⁶ So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing, ⁷ for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more. (Exod. 36:2-7)

You are such a generous people. All we have accomplished in 2017 was by your devotion and generosity. I've asked you to go one mile with missions for Christ, I wonder if you might consider going two with the upkeep and development of his church? Thank you in advance for praying and acting on this point.

FORWARD: *"I will go anywhere provided it be forward"*

David Livingstone



"The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry to me. Tell the people of Israel to go forward!" Exodus 14:15 In 2017 we went further forward than ever before with missions and attendance. Our goal for \$100,000 in October is advancing and Christmas was met with the largest attendance in the history of our church 592 souls. However, I think its 600 because a few people left before the count. :) Craig Groeschel, the pastor of the largest Christian church in America said "in order to reach the people that no one is reaching we need to doing what no one else is doing. It is official as of January 2018. Massachusetts is the highest un-churched state in America (NH, ME and CT come in after us). That means we are in the center of the greatest mission field of America. Church as usual no longer works. We need to begin a missional shift that gears all we say and do in the direction of reaching those we are here for, those who have yet to know Jesus personally the way we do. That means our language, our efforts, our friendships our outreaches our facility and more all must be restructured in such a way as to remove all barriers and hindrances, confusions and clauses that obstruct easy access and understanding of who Jesus is and what he desires to be in their lives. I am convinced Jesus is honest when he says "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me." The challenge in our day is moving away from building christen subculture in the church and constructing bridges between the community and our neighbors to Christ. This will require us to choose the purpose of relevance and reaching others for preference and pampering to our wants and culture comforts. J.F.K., the former president of United States noted that the Chinese word for "Change" is a compound word combining opportunity and danger. When it comes to change in the church some only see danger, other recklessly advance the opportunity but the wisdom of God acknowledges them both and advances in faith that God will bring about the goal if were willing to move. In the words the Apostle, this Paul "will become all things to all people in order to reach some."

In Christ,

Pastor Paul Conway