

October 31, 2020

Dear Bethany Family and Friends:

2020 has been emotionally fatiguing, financially challenging, but also spiritually stimulating — because this unparalleled “season” of challenges has forced us to lean on the Lord and lift up one another as never before.

I am writing to update you on two important ministry areas that have been impacted this year in the life of Bethany.

The *first* is that we were not able to reopen Bethany’s beloved and vital outreach to our community, **West Covina Christian School**, for its sixty-seventh year. Even before COVID-19 the school was struggling financially. In large part, this was due to three intersecting causes.

- a. An unprecedented government mandate almost doubled the minimum wage in a radically abbreviated 5-year time frame (2016-2020). Like many small businesses, this caused our expenses to increase far beyond our capacity to increase revenue to match.
- b. Our enrollment had slowly decreased over the past twenty years from a peak of 545 from 1996-1999 to around 200 from 2014-2020. That trend was not sustainable.
- c. In an effort to retain students and assist our families, WCCS had kept tuition costs far below what competing private school were charging, and also generously provided discounts for families in need. But that was not enough to increase our enrollment and tuition income, and therefore cover our rapidly increasing costs. Radical tuition increases over the past 5 years wouldn’t have been sustainable for many of our families.

We spent long hours praying, seeking wise counsel, and thinking strategically. Together, our Deacons and Senior Staff came to the painful realization that our school was not sustainable for another school year. This was the most heart-breaking decision we have ever had to make, and we continue to pray for God’s sustaining grace and provision for our wonderful cadre of teachers and staff, as well as the students and families who were impacted. We look forward to the lifting of restrictions on public gatherings for an opportunity to celebrate the ongoing legacy of West Covina Christian School, to thank our much-loved teachers and staff, and to express our admiration and gratitude to our world-class Principal for the past 14 years, Chris Petersen!

The *second* is that the school’s financial struggles **deeply impacted our church’s finances**, even though our General Fund Giving has remained fairly steady for many years because of the faithful giving of our members and regular attenders, like yourself. Over the past year, Bethany had to cover the school’s financial shortfalls at a cost of close to **\$200,000**.

The ripple effect from WCCS’ financial struggles, combined with higher than anticipated increases in Property expenses, have dramatically affected Bethany’s finances.

This year the “season” of Coronavirus also brought fresh financial challenges:

- In March, COVID-19 concerns and “safer at home” protocols forced us to the creative response of **live-streaming** our services. To make this happen, we had to purchase live-streaming video and computer equipment. (A hearty thank you to Chad Loury, Emily Rios, Billy Vasquez and Sergio Palacios who make our video stream possible!)
- In September, after a longer-than-expected quarantine and season of physical isolation, we prayerfully and strategically **re-opened** meeting in person for outdoor worship services. To make this happen, we had to purchase and rent outdoor sound equipment.
- *Of course, many other financial challenges arise on a 10.5 acre, 68-year old property.*

**So we have been working to address our current financial challenge, in several ways:**

▪ **BY RENTING OUR PROPERTY:** We will begin renting this Sunday to a Spanish-speaking congregation, *Iglesia Sobrenatural* and Pastor Juan Brambila. They have been without a church home for quite some time and have only been able to have services **online** for the past seven months of the coronavirus crisis! Their services will be outdoors at noon in the same location that we meet at 9:00 A.M., to use our sound system and chairs we will already have set up. We are privileged to be able to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ in this way . . . and we pray that God uses *Iglesia Sobrenatural* to bring life and hope our Spanish-speaking neighbors.

▪ **BY RENTING OUR PROPERTY #2:** We are negotiating with a school to use our property during the week, when health protocols allow. We want to leverage the assets God has blessed us with, and be a blessing to our community. More info will be forthcoming.

▪ **BY OUR FAITHFUL TITHES & OFFERINGS:** The primary approach we see to address our financial challenge, as always for the people of God, is through the faithful weekly giving of our members and regular attendees.

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So with that said, I'd like to invite you to **A MONTH OF THANKFULNESS & GRATEFUL GIVING!** It's hard to believe that November arrives this Sunday! (*We all thank God for the end of DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME, giving us an extra hour of sleep to enjoy THIS SUNDAY MORNING!*)

We want to do two things during November:

① **PRAISE the Lord** for His goodness and mercy!

- *An unexpected bonus of live-streaming is how it opened a door for new guests to join us!*
- *We are grateful to see many groups meeting, in-person and online: BeGroups, Family Focus, Maranatha, Married Strong, God's Girls, Men's Group, our Virtual Prayer Group, our youth — who baked up an amazing Halloween Dinner on Wed. night — and our children's ministry — who celebrated a mini-Harvest Party at Wed. night's GrowZone!*
- *Our Food Pantry continues serving families in our community with food and support!*

② And **GIVE to the Lord** to help address a year of unprecedented expenses — and to bolster our 68-year commitment to be a place of NEW BEGINNINGS, HOPE and ENCOURAGEMENT to our broken world and our beleaguered community.

Will you join me, our staff and congregational leaders in **continuing** your faithful tithes and offerings . . . and in **giving a substantial over-and-above THANKSGIVING OFFERING** to help us end the year with all expenses paid, and continue to be a blessing to our neighbors?

Grace & Peace to you . . . as we seek to bring Grace & Peace to our community,

  
Pastor Doug

P.S. **Please give a generous over-and-above THANKSGIVING OFFERING during November** to say "Thank you!" to God for sustaining us . . . and to help us continue to offer our community mercy and hope! Give safely and securely at [www.bethanyonline.net/giving](http://www.bethanyonline.net/giving) !