

SENIOR PASTOR REPORT

REV. DAVID THOMAS

Reading over my report for last year, I was reminded that I ended with the vision statement that church leadership formulated in 2020. It seemed like a good way to start this year's report:

Through the Holy Spirit, we seek to be built into a family of faith rooted in love and centred in Christ, into which others are welcomed and embraced. We seek to be transformed as disciples of Jesus, being equipped and equipping others to serve and to evangelize through our church and into the surrounding community. We seek to be a church growing in faith, forming deeper relationships with God, with one another, and those seeking God.

At one point last year, I heard a therapist on 100 Huntley Street talking about living in the aftermath of COVID. He compared it to living in the aftermath of a hurricane – a traumatic event beyond anyone's control. This image stayed with me as I pictured our church (along with every other church) picking ourselves up out of the wreckage, surveying the damage, and meeting up with fellow survivors.

Of course, we could just as easily say fellow returning exiles and consider that Biblical image. It was meaningful that we bookended 2022 with a series on the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah, along with a look at the short prophecy of Haggai. All of these stories happened in the context of the people of Israel returning from exile in Babylon. "Return! Rebuild! Renew!" was the cry, and it remains the cry. The vision never changed. Our foundation never changed, and we took comfort from this truth – knowing that God is in control and God's divine plan will not be thwarted – in the middle of the uncertainty with which 2022 began. Our prayer was that God would stir our hearts, and keep us faithful to the calling He had placed on our lives.

In Ephesians 3:20, Paul promises that the Holy Spirit is at work in us to accomplish abundantly far more than we could ask or imagine. When we were able to resume in-person worship at the beginning of March 2022, who would imagine that our church would soon become a place of belonging for many newcomers to Canada? Who would have imagined that we would hear people say things like "I came here and felt like I had come home!" Who would have imagined that a lay-driven effort would result in a ministry for the youngest members of our Blythwood family every Sunday morning? Who would have imagined that people would be called to new leadership roles, answer that call, and find the Holy Spirit working within them in whole new ways?

Please pray for me that God gives me the will, strength, and wisdom to live out the call that God

has placed on my life and in our lives together. September 2022 marked the 11th anniversary of my vocational ministry here at Blythwood, and I continue to be so thankful for this and for each and every one of you. I'm thankful for the staff who support us all; for Jennifer in the church office; for Dan and all he does to make sure things look good and run well; for Adolfo and his music ministry. It really feels like a family here in every way. I want to thank the deacons with whom I work closely for their continued support and encouragement.

Finally, I want to extend thanks to my wife Nicole. I say this every year and it is as true as it ever was. I would not be the man I am nor do what I am enabled to do without her.

I encourage us all to keep on pressing on together. It matters not so much what the future holds as knowing who holds the future. God is with us. We share a glorious hope in Christ and are blessed through the Holy Spirit to bring that glorious hope into our today. It's my prayer along with Paul that our love will overflow more and more as we are rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.

In Christ,



Pastor David Thomas