

July 19, 2005

**Dear GEBC Family:**

On Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, the Elders got together for their annual retreat. This time was set aside for the purpose of joining in prayer, as well as planning for the upcoming ministry year. Below is a short summary of this year's prayer and planning retreat, as well as an invitation to attend one of **two town hall meetings** where we would like to further discuss all that the Lord has laid on our hearts for GEBC.

**Becoming a Disciple Making Church**

GEBC is a church committed to helping people follow Jesus. Toward that end, the Elders spent the morning of the retreat evaluating our current strengths as a church in the disciple making effort and identifying priorities for improvement. Three of those priorities included:

- **Clarifying the "8 ATTRIBUTES" of a disciple**, communicating them to the congregation and identifying spiritual disciplines that will help cultivate these attributes in the lives of each parishioner. These attributes served as the basis for the fall 2004 sermon series that Kelly preached titled "Following the King," which is available on the church's website ([www.gebible.org](http://www.gebible.org)).

**Disciples are those who:**

1. Receive salvation freely by grace (John 3:16)
  2. Live in worship continually (John 4:23-24)
  3. Depend on Jesus' power fully (John 15:5)
  4. Connect in fellowship deeply (Acts 2:43-47)
  5. Serve with Jesus passionately (Luke 14:27)
  6. Obey Jesus' teaching wholly (Matthew 7:24)
  7. Love others selflessly (Matthew 22:36-40)
  8. Pursue the lost intentionally (Matthew 28:18-20)
- **Raising the expectation for lifestyles of obedience.** Of the eight attributes listed above, the Elders identified obedience to Jesus' teachings (attribute #6) as a priority in the days ahead, believing that submission to Scriptural authority significantly affects the disciple making effort of the church. It's our desire that the Word of God would increasingly move from head, to heart to hands, and that we would all be both hearers of the Word as well as doers. Some of the specific areas mentioned for increased obedience were daily Bible study, as well as regular worship attendance, giving and service.
  - **Strengthening the equipping focus** of our ministry at GEBC. As a disciple making church the Elders have identified "4 ACTIVITIES" that the church must be involved in if we are to successfully make disciples. Those activities are:

- **Proclaiming** the gospel (Matthew 4:17)
- **Restoring** the broken (Matthew 9:26)
- **Equipping** the saints (Ephesians 4:12)
- **Sending** out disciple (Matthew 28:19)

These “4 ACTIVITIES” will serve as the focus of Kelly’s fall sermon series beginning in September, titled “Becoming a Disciple-making Church.” And while each of the activities are important, the Elders believe that the church’s ability in equipping believers to live out their faith is directly tied to our success in creating a community of people obedient to Jesus’ teaching. Specifically, this means strengthening both our adult education and small groups programs to better train and support believers in their faith.

For a better understanding of how the “4 ACTIVITIES” of a disciple making church are integrated with the “8 ATTRIBUTES” of a disciple we have included the disciple making target, which was distributed at the May 2005 business meeting.

### **Understanding the Role of Elders in a Disciple Making Church**

The apostle Peter encourages the Elders to “shepherd the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-2), which includes guarding the church’s doctrine, setting the church’s ministry direction and leading in matters of church discipline. Toward that end, we spent a portion of the afternoon during our retreat identifying disciplines that are important for each of the Elders to be practicing in order to lead with integrity. Below is a summary of our commitments to you as leaders.

- **Guarding the Church’s Doctrine:** To be men of the Word, diligently studying the Scripture applying it to our lives, as well as overseeing the teaching ministries of the church.
- **Setting the Church’s Ministry Direction:** To be men of prayer, open to the Holy Spirit’s leading and seeking the Lord’s guidance both personally and corporately.
- **Leading Matters of Church Discipline:** To be men of transparency, cultivating the discipline of accountability and confession.

As your shepherds, we want to set an example in life and godliness and ask for your prayers for our wisdom, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and integrity. As your shepherds, we also want to care for God’s flock well, but with approximately 370 family units in our congregation care giving requires great intentionality. Toward that end, we have divided the congregation alphabetically, assigning a portion of the congregation to each of the lay Elders. Below is the shepherding division:

Scott Brennecke: D, E, F, L  
 Dave Ochs: A, B, C  
 Wes Wetherell: G, H, O, N

Mike Hendriksen: S, U, V, W  
 Mark Tucker: I, J, K, M, Z  
 Dave Wiegman: P, R, T, Y

In an effort to communicate with and care for the spiritual needs of the congregation, each of the elders will be contacting one family per week from their section of the alphabet, either by phone, email or hand written note. Our goal is simply to build bridges of fellowship, strengthen community and encourage one another in the faith. If you have questions or concerns about the church, or need spiritual support and prayer, then you are also welcome to contact any of us as well.

### **Compassion Evangelism**

The Elders closed the retreat with a discussion on the unique opportunity and responsibility we have as a wealthy congregation to reach out to and care for those who are economically impoverished. This discussion included a review of several passages of Scripture noting the following:

- The sin of Sodom was not simply sexual but included a neglect of the poor. (Ezekiel 16:48-50)
- There is a unique spiritual danger and responsibility to wealth described throughout Scripture (Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 12:13-34, James 5:1-6)
- The distinguishing mark between those experiencing eternal condemnation and eternal life was described by Jesus as care for the poor and imprisoned. (Matthew 25:31-46)
- Compassion toward the poor was a powerful apologetic in the early church. (Acts 4:32-37)
- We are sent out to preach the good news (Great Commission), as well as to love our neighbor as ourselves (Great Commandment), and that the effort to reach our community must include both compassion and evangelism.

**It is our desire** that GEBC would be a more accurate reflection of the community in which we live, with rich and poor worshiping together, serving together and caring for one another. We are convinced that for this to happen we must stop simply inviting people to our building and build a model of ministry based upon pursuing not only the lost but also the least among us, and we are praying for the Lord's leadership in this area.

### **Vision Cultivation**

As a disciple making church, PROCLAIMING the good news of God's grace and calling men and women to a lifestyle of worship is one of the four non-negotiable activities in which we must be involved. In order to make more disciples we need to increase the activity of PROCLAIMING at GEBC. We are grateful for the increasing opportunity to reach our community in our worship service setting; over the past two years, average attendance in our worship services has increased over 15% and, while we're not yet at capacity in the worship center, we are reaching capacity in our areas of our children's ministry.

Recognizing that limitations in this area can discourage people from coming, the Elders are proposing that we **add a third Sunday morning worship service** in January 2006. We believe that this change will position us well for increasing the depth of our Sunday morning teaching ministries for the whole family, as well as

provide needed room for growth in the worship services. As you will note below, we recognize that changes of this nature require careful planning and communication, and that they impact all of the GEBC family in different ways; we welcome your questions and feedback as we plan for the addition of this service and the new Sunday morning schedule.

We recognize that one of the reasons for our continued growth is the quality and passion of those leading us in the corporate worship experience. We are grateful we have a highly creative, visionary staff that continues to grow in finding new and effective ways to communicate the Gospel message. For example, more than 675 people attended the Worship in the Park service held last month (as opposed to our average Sunday morning attendance of almost 500), and we are anticipating the release of GEBC's first CD of Worship music, produced entirely by GEBC volunteers and staff. This is a tool that will help cultivate a lifestyle of worship among our congregants, as well as help us invite others to GEBC, giving them a taste of our Sunday morning worship.

In addition, we recognize that there are a sizeable number of those in our community who simply will not attend a Sunday morning worship service for a variety of reasons. They may, however, be open to other times and, to this end, we are planning on offering a **Saturday evening worship service**, starting in September 2006.

As we continue to seek to follow God's lead in this regard, we recognize that we must strengthen our infrastructure in this critical area of our staff in order to provide for the administrative and leadership responsibilities necessary for recruiting and equipping additional volunteers for service in the worship department.

In order to prepare us for this next phase of ministry, we plan to add a full time Worship Ministry Director to the staff. This person will be responsible for implementing, under Jason Sirvatka's direction:

- All programming and production aspects within the worship department, including coordinating all technical and artistic production elements, lighting, graphics, audio, stage/auditorium design, decoration, and video production, and
- Managing all weekly programming and special events production, such as creating department calendars, organizing teams of vocalists and instrumentalists and scheduling rehearsals, as well as leading the event planning process when working with other church departments.

In this structure, our worship pastor, Jason Sirvatka, will be able to expand the worship ministries and develop new ways of communicating the timeless truth of the Gospel creatively in order to reach our community. Jason will also oversee the worship director and continue to be responsible for all aspects of the worship services including: cultivating and casting a vision for corporate worship, planning and overseeing the implementation of the weekly worship services and shepherding those within his ministry.

As we've reviewed our options, we believe that this new structure (and the number of people and resources) is comparable to similarly sized churches, particularly as we continue to grow, and will meet both our near and longer term needs.

**Two town hall meetings are scheduled for Sunday evening** July 31st and August 10th from 7:00-8:00 p.m, and we would like to invite you to attend one of two to discuss the three and four services format, the addition of a full time worship ministry director, and whatever else may be on your heart. We look forward to these evenings together, discussing the direction of ministry at GEBC.

**In closing, we would like to say thanks** for the opportunity to serve as Elders at GEBC, and to let you know how encouraged we are by your financial support. You should have received your quarterly giving statement by now, but if you have not please contact the office. Giving to the ministries of GEBC is up \$99,000 over last year at this time, a total of almost 16%.

We would invite you to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have, or to share your needs so that we can pray for you. We look forward to advancing the Lord's Kingdom together.

**Sincerely, The Elders of GEBC**

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