

State of the
CHURCH
REPORT



to the Congregation
of the Fairfield Church of Christ
September 11, 2016

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Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and our visitors, thank for worshipping with us today. The elders would like to take this opportunity to address our congregation. We would like to share this “state of the congregation” address with you. We plan to do this annually.

As you may know, the FCC (Fairfield Church of Christ) was formed in 1963. 66 charter members, many from the North Seventh Street Church of Christ, agreed to “seed” a new church in the rapidly growing community of Fairfield. Of those charter members, at least 2 are still members today. At that time, Rod Allee became the first preaching minister of the congregation. He was followed by Jim Walker, Dave Phillips, Dave Cordray, Dave Hargrave and Brian Schreiber. We have grown through the years. Today, we have nearly 750 members on our Church roll, and another 250 who regularly attend and worship with us. You heard that right. FCC has nearly 1,000 members and regular attenders. On any given Sunday, 450-500 individuals worship and attend Sunday School classes with us. Over the course of a year, 1200 different individuals or more will attend FCC.

This congregation has been faithful in many, many ways. Every year, a gospel-based sermon is preached at least two times every Sunday. We are committed to presenting the Gospel here every week. We intend for our messages to be relevant and challenging. We intend the messages here to win the lost to Christ and to challenge those who have already committed their lives to Him to grow and mature in Him.

33 different Sunday School classes are taught every Sunday to students of the Bible - children, youth and adults. We host classes for every age. At least 65 hours of Bible-based instruction occur here every Sunday of the year. Over the course of one year, that totals 3,380 hours. Small groups meet regularly in this building and in the homes of members of this congregation, again for the purpose of studying God’s word. Separate Men’s and Women’s groups meet regularly to study God’s word. Our Poema class is run by dedicated members who share Christ and God’s word with a very special group of people. They are here with this today (SECOND HOUR).

And we don’t simply study God’s word to learn it. Members of this congregation live what they believe. Over the course of any one year, this congregation contributes \$950,000 to the advancement of God’s Kingdom through FCC. More than \$115,000 – 12% of FCC’s income - is sent to missionaries in the field at home and abroad, including some who are members of this congregation. David Lockwood, David and Lydia Graves, and the Halversons in Kosovo benefit from, depend on, and greatly appreciate your generosity. We share in spreading the Gospel to all nations, and to all people groups. This past year, we raised money to help people in Western China become self-sufficient by raising sheep, and in the process, opened the door for evangelization.

Our members participate in building homes with Habitat for Humanity and Crossroads Missions’ Help Build Hope. Members of this congregation take on projects like renovating the Grundy Mountain Mission school. At Christmas time we provided Christmas presents to over 200 children located in this community. We provided Christmas meals to families in this community. We provide gift cards that are given to under resourced children and families in this community in need of food, gasoline, or medicine. Thousands (45,000) of pre-mixed meals are sent to Haiti. In fact, over the past 2 years, we’ve sent a total of 125,000 meals to Haiti. The meals are financed by members of this congregation, who also devote their personal time to package those meals.

Members of this congregation devote their personal time to short-term mission projects in foreign countries – countries like Honduras and Haiti. In fact, the past several years, FCC has hosted a group consisting of the members of several area churches – including members of this congregation - that has packaged medicine which is provided to a Haitian orphanage. This year, a group from FCC participated in delivering that medicine in Haiti. Members of this congregation make weekly visits to prisons to share the Gospel with inmates. Members of this congregation lead a worship service

every Friday night for residents of Tri County Extended Care. Our high schoolers travel domestically to places such as Kansas City and Chicago to serve those communities. Our junior high schoolers provide similar services in the urban core of Cincinnati. We are teaching our youth to be the Church of tomorrow.

Over the course of any given year, a devoted group of members of this congregation meets weekly to pray for the needs of this congregation. Our staff has a weekly prayer meeting to cover the needs of this congregation that have been shared with them. We recently adopted the Fairfield Central Elementary School, and hosted a staff meeting with lunch and snacks for the teachers and administrators. Some of them asked that we pray for them this school year, and members of this congregation have graciously agreed to do so. Our Men's ministry has provided temporary playground equipment for the students there.

A devoted group of individuals prepares meals for families who have lost loved ones. In any given year, our staff preside over 20 - 25 funerals, ministering to members and nonmembers alike, sharing the gospel and comfort with those during that time of great loss.

Through our Upward Basketball program, approximately 300 youth will meet in this building weekly to practice and play in games, as well as cheerlead for the players. Participants learn not only the fundamentals of sport, but more importantly are introduced to Christ and Godly living through their coaches. And 600 or more adults will attend those games – individuals who might otherwise never step in a church building. More than 25 families have joined us in fellowship here at FCC because of the Upward program, while over 200 have visited our services and special events. And the program has grown so much that now the use of other church buildings is required. During the Upward season, 64 devotions are presented by our staff and by members of this congregation during games. And the coaches present devotions at every practice session.

Over the course of any year, 80 young ladies will attend monthly meeting with American Heritage Girls in this building. This past year, these young ladies shipped over 100 shoeboxes at Christmas to Columbia South AMERICA – filled with toys, soap, toothbrushes and tooth paste, to name a few items. And 15 young men will attend semi-monthly meetings with Trail Life. Both of these groups actively participate in community projects – designed to share the love of Christ with those in need. They devote countless hours to assisting Matthew 25 Ministries with packaging food, clothing and other necessities for people in need not only in this community, but also in the world at large.

Over the course of one year, FCC will host at least 3 community events – such as “trunk or treat”, “springfest” and “fall fest”. Hundreds of members of the community attend those events – again, individuals who otherwise have no contact with this or any other church. The Men's group recently began hosting “parties in the park” to reach and serve members of the Hamilton community.

Our children will perform 2 musicals. More than 200 hours will be volunteered by members of this congregation – an enormous effort- in order to successfully present the Gospel in creative ways. The musicals are attended by 600 individuals.

Every week at this church, as many as 15 individuals volunteer their musical talents to help us worship. Slides are projected for our convenience every Sunday, sound is monitored and lighting is provided by volunteers who faithfully serve – behind the scenes, I might add – to enhance our worship. You've noticed, I'm sure that greeters are posted at every door of this building every Sunday. Again, all by committed members of this congregation who want to share Christ with the community. New Horizons, our senior citizen group, will deliver banana bread to visitors of our church – every week – just to help new folks feel welcome. And our building is opened up and prepared weekly long before any of us arrive. All by members of this congregation who want to serve. Our house and grounds are maintained by a group who faithfully use their talents in that area. Snow is cleared from our parking lot. Often, we don't even notice that these things are going on. Our finances are attended to by another group of individuals who devote their talents in this area. We regularly support a large group of missions. Our mission team is in constant contact with the missions we support.

Over the course of any given year, between 400 – 500 hospital calls will be made primarily by our staff. Additionally, Sunday School classes, small groups and individual members of this congregation also make such calls. We have a Greeting Card Ministry that sends out cards to shut-ins and hospitalized members. Communion is delivered weekly to members who are unable to attend worship services.

And the list could go on and on as to work performed in formal ministries sponsored by FCC – coordination of medical equipment for members, assistance in sorting and identifying clothing for children and adults with area ministries. None of this counts the personal ministry engaged in by so many of our members that we may never hear about – phone calls, notes, letters, prayers, help with personal chores, ride sharing.

All of this – and more - occurs regularly here at this congregation. You see Brothers and Sisters, God’s Kingdom is advancing here in Fairfield – by God’s grace we are part of it!! Jesus promised us that the Gates of Hell themselves cannot stand against His church. There is so much to celebrate with gratitude to God! And the opportunity exists to do even more. And we are asking you to join us.

Like so many congregations in our country and community, we face challenges; but with those challenges come opportunities.

1. The purpose of FCC is to reach the lost with the Good News of the Gospel, to teach and make disciples of those who have accepted Christ, and to serve God and our fellow man. Christ has promised to be with us every step of the way. But we are not unopposed. We have an enemy. We are involved – you and I – in spiritual warfare. Do not doubt for one moment that Satan is working against us. He does not want us to succeed. And he will do whatever is in his power to distract us, to dissuade us, to cause dissention among us. But if we will resist him, he will flee from us. If you thought that the Christian walk would be an easy one, let us advise you otherwise. Jesus has asked you to pick up your cross daily and follow Him. It will not be easy – but we are here to encourage and cheer one another on.
2. Our attendance is declining and has been for several years. In response to that, our staff and elders make regular contact with those who are “missing in action” from our church family. We seek to determine how those missing can be encouraged, helped and restored. We try to learn how we can improve our efforts at honoring Christ and equipping His people. We ask that you join us in this endeavor. If you notice individuals who are missing in action, e mail them, call them, text them, write them. Let them know they are missed. Churches grow primarily because members invite others to church. It is important that all of us invite friends, family, loved ones and neighbors to join us at church. We will do our best to provide the programming, but we need you to help us reach people. We ask that you commit to regular attendance. Yes, your presence here makes a difference to all of us. If every member attended every week, we would see 1,000 people here every week. Think of the encouragement to us all of seeing 1,000 people here every week!
3. We must all commit to continued personal growth. To that end, we strongly encourage all of you to be involved in a small group – a Sunday School or home study group. We grow and mature through these groups – through service offered via the groups, group Bible study and development of personal relationships.
4. Our community and thus our congregation has aged. That predictable aging has changed some of the dynamics and resources that were once a dependable part of our fellowship. And we must make every effort to make the Gospel relevant to the younger generation. We must speak to the next generation in a manner that is meaningful to them, without compromising the Gospel message. Remember, FCC is only one generation away from extinction. We have a second worship service specifically to attract a younger audience. We must monitor it and change it as needed. And we cannot effectively do that without the prayers and support of today’s congregation. We must continue to build our church in anticipation of the future Christians to come.

5. FCC has historically attracted middle class families – and generally two parent families. The statistics suggest that today, young adults are deferring marriage until their thirties. It is not unusual for young people to cease church attendance during their college years, and to return only once they have started families. And many, many households in our community are headed by a single parent. We must continue to develop programming to reach these changing demographics. The Fairfield community needs the message of Jesus Christ today as much as it did 50 years ago. It is the job of the Church – you and I - to spread the good news of God’s mercy and grace through Jesus Christ.
6. We need everyone to exercise the gifts God has given to them. And you have been given one or more gifts. God’s word promises that this is true. The church functions best when we exercise those gifts God has provided.
7. And men – we are actively looking for men who are qualified and willing to serve this congregation as an elder. We need men to prepare now so that they can serve as an elder. Study the scriptures. Develop your gifts. And to those young fathers in this congregation, we remind you that your primary ministry is your family. Raise up your children in the way they go.
8. FCC needs your prayers. Pray for our staff. Pray for our leaders and fellow Christians. Pray that we will accomplish God’s will. Pray that we will reach souls for Christ.
9. Given our aging congregation and declining attendance, it is no surprise that our giving is declining as well. In 2014, our average weekly giving was just over \$19,000. Last year, it was just over \$20,000. This year, it is not quite \$18,000. We are falling below our budget every week by approximately \$1,000. And our 2016 budget was purposely reduced from our 2015 budget. Our working capital – our “rainy day fund”, if you will, has been declining. At the beginning of 2014, that fund totaled approximately \$198,000, or roughly three months of planned expenses. Today, that balance stands at approximately \$95,000 – only slightly more than one month of planned spending. We currently owe approximately \$1.7 million on the loan for the construction of this sanctuary – a sanctuary that was constructed with the expectation that our attendance would total 1,000 every Sunday.

Last year, our finance ministry asked that you consider increasing your giving. You responded. We again encourage each of you to prayerfully consider your tithes and offerings to the work of God’s kingdom here at FCC. We ask specifically that you consider increasing your giving 1%. If you are currently giving 4% of your household income to the Lord’s work here at FCC, please consider giving 5%. And if giving 5%, please consider giving 6%. Giving is not only an outward expression of what is occurring inwardly, giving helps to loosen money’s grip on us. It forces us to rely on God’s providence.

Remember, on the day you die:

God will not ask you what type of car you drove, but He will ask how many you provided transportation to who otherwise had none.

He won’t ask you what brand of clothes you wore, but He will ask you how you helped to clothe those in need. And He won’t ask you how many square feet your home had, but He will ask you how many you showed hospitality to.

10. And that brings us to another opportunity we would like to share with you – Family Promise of Butler county. There seems to be quite a bit of confusion regarding this important ministry. Family Promise of Butler County provides temporary housing to families who have been displaced. We will house families three or four times per year, each time for one week. These families will stay in our building overnight, but otherwise will be at school, at work, or at training during the day. We will provide them with breakfast and evening meals. These families have been carefully screened before they ever enter our building. We are seeking volunteers to help us aid these families in need. That help can be provided in a number of ways – by volunteering to stay

overnight in this building with these individuals or by providing meals for them. We recognize that this may be outside of your “comfort zone”. Sometimes, we are simply called to serve there. Our first week hosting families this year will be Christmas week. Think of it – people who otherwise may not be here will be able to attend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services! An opportunity for us to give back to our community and to God on the very day we celebrate the gift of His son to us!

We are certain that many of you would like to know Dave Hargrave’s plans for the future. Dave and Connie’s future is a little uncertain at the present. Dave would like to remain with us through 2017. After that, he would like to continue on a reduced schedule. Dave and Connie have been an integral part of this congregation, and we appreciate all they have done for us. At the end of days, we’ll all want to hear those words “Well done thou good and faithful servant”. We have no doubt Dave and Connie will be hearing those words. Please join us in expressing our thanks to them for a job well done.

We have pointed out the many, many areas of service that members of this congregation are involved in – preaching, teaching, leading music, serving the community, serving the church, praying, calling on the sick and those in prison, sending cards, delivering bread and communion – and many more. Will you please do us a favor – if you are involved in any of these important ministries, will you please stand so that we can thank you? Thanks to all of you. Please continue in your efforts to serve. And if for some reason there is anyone not standing – we have a place for you to serve! Please see one of us!

As you see, here at FCC, we have a rich history of serving the Lord. Committed Christians serve Him regularly here even now – often without notice or fanfare. The Gospel is being preached, lives are being saved for eternity, people are being housed and fed, and we are seeking even more ways to serve Him. Yes, we face challenges. But Jesus has promised to be with us even until the end of the age. Think of all we can accomplish together. And we ask that you continue with us as we journey into the future and faithfully serve our Lord. It is both our joy and our task to reach a dying world with the message of Jesus Christ, to teach those who have accepted Him so that we can all grow and mature, and to serve God and our fellow man. We are to show God’s love in tangible ways so that some might believe.

Will it be easy? No!

Will it require sacrifice? Yes!

But in doing so, will you have invested your life in God’s eternal Kingdom? Yes!

Together, we can reach the Fairfield community for Christ!

Let’s finish this race together!