



Bridgeway Community Church

Annual Report 2020

"Find The Wonder"

2020 Leadership Team Report

Introduction

With 2020 starting to draw to a close after another busy and exciting year for the church and the Leadership Team, we pause to take a look back at what this year has held, and where we are going in 2021.

We started the year out with a brand-new pastor (for all intents and purposes), Pastor Bear came in November 2019 right before the Holidays and the end of the year activities and we were still getting to know each other, and there were some major structural pieces to put in place. Along the way, a global pandemic hit, we lost access to our primary meeting space and saw God's provision in being able to go online and eventually opening a new meeting space. The following report looks at some of the major activities of the team this year, and where we see going from here.

Studying and Learning Together

Studying and learning has been a continuous theme for the Leadership Team since we were formed and working with Pastor Bear has been no exception to this, though with Pastor Bear's leadership this has expanded out to largely include the congregation as well. We started off with Bear's background "Winning on Purpose" (Kaiser) compared with the Leadership Team's background in Leading Leaders (Malphurs), and a Policy Governance Workshop at the beginning of the year so that Pastor Bear and the Leadership Team could start "speaking each other's language" better.

This was the start of opening workshops to the congregation, as that has continued to be a theme as we have worked through additional books this year: "Unstuck Church" (Morgan) and "Developing the Leader Within You 2.0 (Maxwell), as well as discussions on "Women in Ministry" in order to practicing studying theology together.

The studies have complimented and supplemented training we have done in past years in learning ways of doing church governance and served as launch pads for other discussions such as a new Church Mission statement and signs of a healthy church. In studying alongside the congregation, it is our intention and hope that others will learn with us to better understand our work while preparing future leaders to serve God with their gifts.

Church Governance and Bylaws

Our big piece of work for the year – finalizing a plan for BridgeWay's governance and implementing it, along with other changes, into a revised set of bylaws for BridgeWay. As with other pieces, this was done against a backdrop of many other moving pieces, including getting to know Pastor Bear and in sharing with the congregation along the way.

In addressing the Bylaws, it was not a simple matter of revising a few statements, and it was expected to "ideally" be a 5-7 month project, as outlined by Metanoia Ministries who

recommended the review (Total months actually spent working it won't be far off that). As we worked through a draft read of our current bylaws and comparison vs other Bylaws in February, it was clear which pieces were going to take the most time for the Team and for the congregation to work through. Pastor Bear requested a pause of the work while we did some additional study and so he could lead the church through some sermon series to lay groundwork for the eventual discussions. It was agreed to on March 9th that we would pause this work until summer to allow for this.

We did not yet realize on that Monday that by the end of the week (Thursday March 12th to be specific) that Maryland would be entering a state of shutdown in response to COVID-19, and that we'd be spending the next few weeks making major adjustments to how we do church together. Amazingly, this wound up having very little impact to the plan we had outlined for our Bylaws that Monday, and is just one example of where God has directed our steps along the way!

An extension was requested by and granted to the Leadership Team in May to finish the work on Bylaws and transition of governance. We have recently given a more extensive report on steps taken, our progress, and our thinking regarding Bylaws and Elders. The leadership team has been studying what the Bible has to say about Elders, Women as Elders, models of church governance, and what changes BridgeWay needs to make to its governance structure both on the spiritual and "business" sides of the church.

A draft set of Bylaws was presented to the congregation in October and a townhall meeting was held to share with the congregation and receive feedback on November 1st. A large amount of feedback and questions were received, with much of it focused on the same areas the Leadership Team has been studying and discussing. That feedback has been reviewed and changes drafted by a smaller team.

As of the writing of this letter, the revisions are being looked over by the whole team, and we will be making final changes in early December, with a plan to bring the final Bylaws recommendation before the congregation for a vote in mid-January. This will allow for an Advent Season focused on more important things – such as pausing from our busy lives to remember and celebrate the Hope, Faith, Joy and Peace we have from Jesus coming to earth to atone for our sins.

Building Transition

This year has been a year of transition all around, and our facilities are no exception. The Facilities Analysis and Site Transition Team (FAST Team) was already in place from 2019, having analyzed our facilities and assets (Phase I), our needs and desires (Phase II), and had commenced a search (Phase III) late last year.

Throughout 2020 additional conversations took place to update the Leadership Team on the search and for the Leadership Team to provide additional direction and empowerment,

including partnering with a real estate agent to better search for buildings. The task took on new significance as COVID-19 closed down the local schools forcing us out of Evergreen Elementary school where we have been meeting for many years, and the repurposing of our Community Center as a broadcast studio for Sunday morning online worship.

Through the diligent work of our FAST Team and God's provision, a viable facility was identified in July - right around the time we were looking at how to reopen church in person and get together again. Praise God for His provision! While the ride to signing a year Lease from November 2020-October 2021 was a bit bumpy and took some twists, turns, and required additional providential work from God, we have our first building with full time occupancy large enough to hold worship services! The Leadership Team would like to thank the FAST Team for their hard work in identifying a new facility for worship and conducting the negotiations for the lease. As school buildings, libraries, etc. in the area still are not available for leasing due to COVID-19, the provision of a facility we have full time use of is especially encouraging.

As we move into the 5 South Event Center for the next year, we are also moving out of the Community Center on Great Mills Road with our use of the facility concluding at the end of November. This will end its time as our first building, which allowed for offices, meeting space, prayer, youth group, and other activities. We are grateful for those who helped turn it from an empty store front into office and meeting space, the opportunities for prayer, ministry, learning and community it has provided, and even most recently as a lifeboat for streaming our worship services while looking for new meeting space.

The 5 South Event Center looks to only be a temporary home, but it will provide us a stable place to meet for the next year. We look forward to the opportunities it will provide to serve as a base of ministry and outreach on a main thoroughfare, the ability to take effort being expended on set up and turn it to other uses, and as a taste of caring for a building and looking towards future opportunities. We will need to quickly begin looking (and saving!) for another facility early next year, but in the meantime we are grateful for having a place to call home.

COVID-19

The major curveball of 2020 – COVID-19. The Bible warns us to stay alert and be diligent in being about our Master's work – we do not know what tomorrow holds and need to be ready in and out of season. Even as we watched COVID becoming a bigger concern around the world, the speed with which lockdowns and changes hit Maryland were still rapid and a bit shocking – there were still only a few confirmed cases in Maryland at the time. Your A/V Team was already starting to draft plans for what remote scenario might look like, but it was still impressive the speed in which they, the Worship team adapted for a remote broadcast service with untried technology and little real notice. The Leadership Team would again like to thank those who were involved in setting up and iterating the broadcasting of our services – this was an entirely new effort for BridgeWay.

COVID-19 has had many impacts on individuals, families, and communities. It has required a lot of time from the Leadership Team and Worship / AV Team to react to new government mandates, adapt policies and procedures, find new “normals”, and balancing human safety with a need to worship God in community as we are designed and commanded to do. Along with trying to do the “governance” work of adapting the church operations to account for COVID-19 restrictions, the Leadership Team took on some of the shepherding work, reaching out to congregants to pray for the body through this difficult time.

As COVID-19 continues, we have been given opportunities to stop and remember that God is in control, that our lives here are finite and precarious, and that our hope is in eternity with Jesus rather than on this earth. We have opportunities to stop and spend time with our family, evaluate priorities, reach out to our neighbors and coworkers, to share the reason for our hope.

BridgeWay now has online services (That is here to stay!) and Life Groups meeting online, making it even easier to invite others into our community. We encourage you to continue sharing with others and ask for prayer if you need it! God is still present and moving, even through something like COVID. It is no stretch to say that as doors were closed (Evergreen), God opened new ones (Online streaming and the 5 South Event Center, which very likely would not have been available otherwise).

Jots and Tittles and Mission

Aside from the big pieces already discussed, the Leadership Team has in the background continued to learn, practice, and refine normal governance responsibilities and practices. These are your basic “keep the church functioning” responsibilities such as ensuring there is a budget, keeping us focused on a particular direction through mission, vision, and objectives (Ministry Outcomes), checking our progress and health through self-evaluations, and transitioning new members on and off the team.

This year, Matt Mortiz stepped down after 2 years of service which included overseeing our Lead Pastor search, and Mark Hess came on board. Many of the things under this category are expected to happen under any form of governance; some were familiar to our church and some weren't. We hope these practices will continue to come more naturally and serve to allow us to focus on the mission of the church.

Speaking of mission, as part of the “Unstuck Church” study series, a new mission statement was developed this year - “Making Disciples, Connecting Communities, Growing the Body of Christ”. While 2020 was a transition year with settling in a new Pastor, transitioning buildings, and fixing up other structural pieces, we are looking forward to our new mission statement forming the basis for our direction in 2021. Speaking of which...

Looking Ahead

BridgeWay has been in a long season of introspection and transition. There is a sense of readiness in the church and on the Leadership Team to be done with this season and moving on to bigger and better things – as well we should. But one step at a time. We have seen God working and opening doors at just the right time all through out the last two and a half years. We fully expect the bylaws and governance piece be finished and approved by the end of January 2021, including a season focused on God rather than work.

After new Bylaws are in place we will focus on transitioning back to being an Elder-led church, putting training in place and formally standing Elders back up, applying the lessons and practices learned in our time as a Leadership Team. Further details will follow once the Bylaws are settled, as that has implications for a future team.

While we are working towards a formal end of the “Leadership Team” and standing back up of Elders, Lord willing that should not be the big event of 2021! It is time to start focusing outward on impacting the community in and around us for the Kingdom of God. We have opportunities available now to offer Living Water to those who thirst for it and to be transforming lives.

This will still take learning and training new leaders, strengthening ministries, starting to prepare for another new building, and other “internal” work, but we trust God that He will bring us through this season of transition and into a season of growth. Please be praying with us that God will get us through this current season, will raise people up for the work ahead, and for opportunities and conviction to share Him as a church with those who need Him.

As the Leadership Team met last week to start looking at 2021, many similar suggestions came up for discipleship opportunities, connecting with the community ideas and how to grow the body of Christ in maturity and size. God has been speaking in our body as well to others, and we look forward to sharing more in the coming months, both in vision and sharing in the work that God has called BridgeWay to. Please be praying for the Leadership Team and Church as we look ahead to what is in store next.

Serving Him with you,

Chris Hess (Chair)

Peter Allen

Sherrri Bankston

Mark Hess

Deborah Leveling

Melisa McMillan

Pastor Bear Clifton

Missions Team Update

November 15, 2020

Members: Lynsey Moritz, Alex Douglas, and Caroline Shadforth

**The Missions Team is passionate about expanding God's kingdom through mobilizing and equipping our church family to serve alongside various local, regional, and international ministries.*

Matthew 25:40, 28:19; Psalm 90:17

A BridgeWay Blessing Foot Print 2020:

Provided over 80 meals for area homeless, created 40 homeless care bags for distribution, established personal relationships with Three Oaks Center residents, provided donations, diapers, and baby formula to area infants and families, sent COVID Care Packages to nursing homes, sponsored 8th grade class of 43 students at the Nazarite Christian School in Haiti, and supported missionaries spreading the gospel all over the world.

Local and regional ministry partners:

Care Net Pregnancy Center of Southern Maryland

St. Mary's Caring Soup Kitchen

Three Oaks Center

Christmas Toys for Tots

Adventureach

International ministry partners:

Northwest Haiti Ministries

The Baker Family

Recommended ministries for individual support:

Naomi's Village

Middle East Missionaries - Ryan and Marcelina J.

Upcoming serving opportunities:

Christmas Toys for Tots Drive

St. Mary's Caring Soup Kitchen

Care Net Pregnancy Center of Southern Maryland donations

Three Oaks

Please refer to our webpage for additional information on supported ministries:

<https://bridgeway-church.org/ministries/missions-2/>

Please pray for continued opportunities to serve the Lord. We look back on 2020 with thanksgiving and toward 2021 with eager hearts! Thank you!

Youth Ministry Update

2020 has been a crazy roller coaster for youth ministry. The end/beginning of 2019/ 2020 was an excellent time for us. We had a lot going on during the holidays in 2019. In October of 2019, we reached out to the community and participated in Piney Point Elementary School's Fall Festival. We also helped give food to those in need during Thanksgiving. Youth group ended the year with our annual Christmas Party and even had a few teens attend from outside the church. We rang in the New Year with games, non-virtual hugs, and so much candy.

The beginning of 2020 was a time we were able to reflect and prepare for the coming months. In March, we started a series called "Teens vs. Parents," where we took a more in-depth look into our relationships with our family and what the Bible says about forgiveness, grace, and communication within those relationships. We started planning our yearly retreats and had our excitement building for the warm summer months to provide late evening sunshine for four square, Nerf Wars, and dodgeball behind the community center.

And then Covid reared its ugly head. As we got the news schools were closing, we decided to cancel the youth group that week. As events began to spiral and news of widespread shutdown started to spread, we knew we needed to get creative with our youth group meetups. The following week Sara Quinn set up Zoom meetings for us, and we could meet "virtually" again. All the while, thinking this would be for a few weeks tops.

To put it lightly, the first meeting was complete insanity. Everyone talking simultaneously, people were having trouble logging in, all of the typical virtual challenges that now epitomize 2020 as we know it. By the grace of God, we quickly learned how to navigate our virtual meetings and come up with creative ways to do Bible lessons, prayer, and game time.

Meeting virtually even allowed us to do things in the youth group we couldn't do before. Ryan was able to invite his brother (a fellow youth leader) from New Jersey to share his testimony virtually with the youth group. We discovered how to use "breakout rooms" to give the teens a small group setting where they share their thoughts and insights. Recently the leaders have devoted time immediately following youth group to talk to each teen individually and learn more about how they are doing and how we can better serve and pray for them.

Fortunately, we have been able to meet a few times outdoors while ensuring we are safely distanced and masked. This provides a little relief for the youth group and some sense of normalcy, especially for those who often cannot see their friends.

We are preparing for a long winter, meeting virtually for at least the next several months. We look forward to a day when we can meet again without masks and social distancing, but we know God is with us. With the flexibility of technology to keep us connected, we are blessed beyond measure as we grow in relationship with one another and with Jesus.

Ryan Quinn / Chelsey Owens

2020 Mission Objectives & Evaluation

As evaluated by Pastor Bear

1. Make Sure We're "Sunday Strong" – Grade A

- a. Ensuring that we have a growing pool of trained ushers and greeters.
- b. Establishing an attractive *Connect Center* with a dedicated volunteer, stocked with church materials, information brochures, welcome gifts, sign-up sheets, etc.
- c. Preparing the worship service to run more smoothly and seamlessly.
- d. Leave margin at the end of the service for people to enjoy fellowship.

2. Stabilize Our Church Governance – Grade A-

- a. Create and offer training seminar on Policy Governance.
- b. We will be rewriting our By-Laws, to align them with recommendations offered last year by the *Metanoia* report. We want to make sure that there is nothing about our governance that is hindering our mission.
- c. The church lacks a thorough and functional Operations Manual.

3. Train and Expand Small Groups – Grade C

- a. We'll provide quarterly training and vision-casting, beginning in January.
- b. We'll develop a plan to birth additional groups by training more leaders.

4. Create Membership Pathways For Assimilation – Grade B+

- a. Hosting periodic fun events to bring our newer visitors together with our staff. Call it a "Pizza With The Pastor" or "Racquetball With The Rev" (maybe not the last one.)
- b. Using our Life Groups to create simple friendship-making opportunities. We called them "Soup & Salad" lunches in my other churches.
- c. Create a new membership seminar or class as a training portal for those who want to become an active part of the church.

5. Provide Training And Streamlining For Our Ministry Teams – Grade B

- a. Bridgeway faithfully reserves 10% of its budget for "missions" activities, but these activities need better definition, direction and communication.
- b. Our caregiving ministry appears to lack substance. BridgeHelps has been a well-intentioned vehicle for distributing care, but its scope is limited.

6. Define Our Current Vision, Mission & Values – Grade A-

- a. Our first formal teaching series together will be a 10-week series called *“Reach, Teach and Unleash – Discovering A Fresh Vision For Our Church.”*
- b. Our Life Groups will each share in this journey by using the weekly Bible studies we will prepare.
- c. We’ll provide a “book-of-the-quarter” for the church to read together. From now through April, I’m going to ask that everyone picks up a copy of *“The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches To Experience Sustained Health”* by Tony Morgan.
- d. Oh, and how could I forget. After a decade, it’s time for Bridgeway to have a new logo for a new decade.

7. Website and Social Media Enhancements – Grade A

We’ve already seen much improvement in these areas, but we’ve got miles to go before we sleep here. I asked one of our newer families recently what drew them to Bridgeway. They said, “First Google, then we checked out your website.” ‘Nuff said.

8. Communication & Networking – Grade B+

Through the use of technology – our website, as well as Planning Center (which we urge every regular attender to get acquainted with), social media, and weekly email-newsletters from both the office and myself – we’ll do everything we can to “get the word out”.

As well, we’ll produce a weekly bulletin or handout for Sunday mornings.

And you will find me highly accessible. Thursdays and Fridays are times when I usually keep open office-hours.

I also will begin networking with local pastors, and regional ministries. We learned from our experience with *Metanoia* that having healthy affiliations with other parts of the Body of Christ helps us be more fruitful.

9. Provide Spiritual Growth Tracks For Every Believer – Grade B-

- a. We’ll provide roadmaps, curriculum and resources to help you grow in each of the three areas.
- b. We’ll teach an innovative concept called the “FULL Member” concept which will help any believer who wishes, to learn how to discover, develop and deploy their unique spiritual giftings and “SHAPE”, within the context of church life.

Pastor's Report

November 15, 2020

There is the possibility that one day a future member of Bridgeway will find a stack of annual reports on a shelf and pull this one out to read because he or she will have heard of the terrible year of the Great Pandemic, and want to know how Jesus' followers responded to that trial.

So it's for you, future member, that I write this report. As things stand at this moment, we are still not "out of the woods". As winter approaches, a serious second wave is rolling across the country, and no one can say for sure what the end of all this will be.

But I digress. Allow me to back up.

I am Bridgeway's second full-time pastor in its twelve year history, and arrived on the scene a year ago (almost to the day), moving from Hollywood, California to Hollywood-California, Maryland to help shepherd a remarkable young church that I found stuck in a bramble full of nettles, with the task of getting them unstuck and moving further on and higher up into the highlands the Lord has appointed for them.

Change is one of the hardest things for any church to do (the church will fire me if I share the joke once more about how many Baptists it takes to change a lightbulb, so I won't share the joke here. You'll have to Google it...Do you still Google, or has that changed? *Change?!)* But in more than 25 years of ministry, I've helped take six churches through that process, with generally positive results. And as our first year draws to a close, I'm very bullish about Bridgeway's future.

Our first two months together were conveniently tethered to the Thanksgiving to Christmas holiday season which made for an ideal get-to-know-you season. The Lord led us to share in a special project together, that was good for me, and I believe good for the congregation. We taught the concept of preparing "30 Second Stories", and we asked those who were willing to share over a stretch of Sundays their 30 Second Story which completed the sentence, "I love Jesus because..." Even Ebenezer Scrooge heard of the wonderful services we were having and paid us a visit.

Christmas culminated in our first ever full-out Children's Christmas Program, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Lord met with us in a special way over those early weeks together.

January, it was down to work. The church was led by a dedicated leadership team (the LT) of men and women who stepped up during some of the congregation's most difficult days. Through the mentoring of Vital Church Ministries, they adopted a model of church governance that inserts a series of checks and balances into the relationship between the pastor, leaders, and staff. When implemented, these agreed-upon policies create unity and accountability, and sets up a church for success by eliminating a host of potential conflicts.

I had been trained in a slightly different model in California, so the first order of business was to develop some alignment in our approaches. We then developed a leadership seminar built around the principles to create a way of passing along these concepts to others. Not the funnest work, but essential for moving forward.

This “policy governance” model insists that the pastor and elders agree to annual *Mission (or Ministry) Objectives*, a healthy practice for any church, for if you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it. So another early project for the me and the LT was to develop those “MO’s” that would guide us throughout the year. (You’ll find this list, along with an evaluation of our progress, at the end of this report).

In its struggle just to keep the church alive during its recent troubles, the congregation had lost its sense of mission, so the next project the Lord led us into was a careful study of a book called “*The Unstuck Church*” by Tony Morgan that has been a great blessing to many churches. I developed a curriculum built around the material, and our first session in late February had just shy of 30 people in attendance.

At the same time, we launched our first formal sermon series called “*Reach, Teach and Unleash: Discovering A Fresh Vision For Ministry*” designed to take us through Easter.

A third project during this time was to overhaul the church’s “membership” materials, and bring them in line with current practices and vision. We needed a clear discipleship entry-point for those entering the church. The end result was our “*Mem-Sem*”, membership seminar, a 3-hour comprehensive class, that covers church doctrine, mission, core values, future vision, and key philosophy of ministry ideas.

All of these initiatives were up and running by March, and a steady stream of new friends were visiting the church almost since the beginning. But then the big bully, Covid-19, strolled into town.

The Global Pandemic

Rumors of a dangerous virus emerging from China began to circulate in January, and in a matter of weeks, the wreckage caused by Covid-19 swept from Europe to America creating an unprecedented national emergency.

Just to show how rapidly things fell apart, after our worship service at Evergreen School on March 8th, our LT met the following day for its monthly meeting, and the virus barely squeaked into the agenda. It’s a good thing, because lockdowns from coast to coast were ordered by the middle of the week, leaving us to scramble and come up with an alternative worship plan.

Within a 48-hour period, our amazing tech and AV team rallied together, and on Sunday, March 15th, Bridgeway offered the first livestreamed service in its history. And it was 20 weeks before we were able to once again offer in-person services.

I am very proud of the way our church rallied as this crisis rolled over us. And I'm especially grateful for a small core of men and women, who did not miss scarcely a Sunday for that 20-week stretch (for once the contagious nature of the virus was realized, we had to confine the participants to a "quaran-team").

It took a couple of weeks to find our footing, and most heartbreaking was the complete inability to observe Easter in any of the traditional ways that were meaningful to us (though a patchwork digital choir that we were able to stitch together brought a tear.) But we soldiered on, and in short order we were able to resume some degree of effective programming – classes, and Mem-Sems, and Life Groups – using virtual tech. Words like Zoom and Web-Ex quickly became everyday vocabulary to us.

Our LT launched an outreach campaign to touch base with each of our families, and we began to offer digital "office hours" which enabled me to make connections with our people. We completed our "Unstuck Church" course, and in the process adopted a new and compelling mission statement for Bridgeway: *"Making Disciples, Connecting Communities, Growing The Body Of Christ"*.

We found that livestreaming our services expanded our reach as now family and friends and visitors from literally around the country were able to "join us for worship" on Sundays.

However, "man was not meant to be alone". It didn't take long before the novelty of the experience began to wear off. Soon everybody and their mother-in-law were doing patchwork choirs. The Livestream analytics showed the audience had plateaued and was in decline. "Zoom fatigue" now entered the national lexicon. Worst of all, it was more or less impossible to sustain the momentum and excitement we had built up pre-Covid, for how do you welcome visitors and future members in this environment?

You could see the changes reflected in our teaching series, as we went from a short series on the End Times, to a summer series in the Psalms to address the whirlwind of emotional upheaval we were all feeling, to a fall series called, *How To Be The Church In A Pandemic* – something we were all wrestling with.

A Remarkable Provision

Most concerning to us was that Bridgeway had been a mobile church, meeting mostly in schools throughout its existence. But as the coronavirus has raged on unrestrained, and the hope for a vaccine was still months away, we knew the schools would not be available to us well into 2021. We were slowly dying on the vine.

But then out of nowhere, a "Facilities" team we had commissioned to study land and properties for our use, learned that a well-known banquet hall in Calloway was available for Sunday rentals. On August 2nd, we resumed in-person worship at the 5 South Event Center, and then one thing led to another, and a couple months later, the property was offered to us for a one-year full-time lease, beginning just two weeks ago as of this writing.

To call this provision a providential, even miraculous answer to prayer, would not be overstating it. For now we have some ground under our feet to build on. And already with the provision, the prayers and vision of many in the church are stirring to life.

And A Path Forward

So how do you be the church in a pandemic? You in the future reading this already know what we did. So I hope you'll give us grace, for we are right now making decisions that you have already judged. Before I slip into a science fiction story, here's what we sense the Lord is laying on our hearts.

We believe that the mission statement we landed on earlier in the year is fully operational right here, right now. Our call is to *Make Disciples, Connect Communities and Grow The Body of Christ*, regardless of Covid-19. In fact, it's very possible that the "fields are even whiter for harvest" than normal, simply because of the spiritual toll this has taken on so many. Scripture makes clear that God sends times of calamity and crisis on a people or nation to awaken it to its need for Him.

Using the three components of our mission statement as subheadings, I believe we can set up a fresh set of "MO's" and pursue them accordingly. Here are thoughts as to the direction we move in, in 2021.

<i>Making Disciples</i>	<i>Connecting Communities</i>	<i>Growing The Body of Christ</i>
Prayer and Worship Development	Life Group Training & Reproduction	Define Growth Pathways For Every Believer
Training in Evangelism & Apologetics	Grow Bridgehelps into a Diaconate	Family Ministry Growth
Every member a FULL Member using his or her SHAPE	Promote Missions Mindset	Leadership Development
	Fellowship with other churches	Elder Training and Commissioning
	Serve our community	

In some ways, the pandemic has been a blessing for the church in that it has forced us to slow down in our rush to the future and to talk to each other about our identity. We are just now emerging from what may in time prove to be the most significant period in this entire year.

It's something we've called "the Rapids", for in a 4-week period we have held 3 church-wide "conversations", practicing something precious we call doing "theology in community".

It gets back to what I shared at the beginning of this report – that change is hard. There's no getting around it. Even if the change is good, it's hard.

After the Jewish exiles returned to their own land after 70 long years in captivity, they began work on rebuilding a new temple, for the first one had been destroyed by the Babylonians. In the book of Ezra is a description of what happened after the foundation of the new temple was laid.

*"And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping..." –
Ezra 3:11-13*

It's interesting that the writer doesn't give the reason why the older men wept. Some suggest it's because they remembered the magnificence of Solomon's temple, and the new one didn't even hold a candle to that. But they may just as easily have been tears of joy, for the foundation was proof that their long exile was over. Either way, what it shows is that change, whether good or bad, touches our deepest emotions.

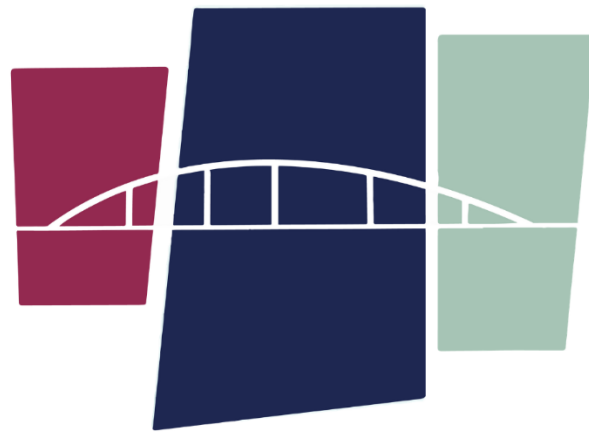
Having walked six congregations through healthy change in my ministry, I would say this to any of you who are struggling right now (and I sense that the Lord placed this on my heart to share with you): *Grieve what you must grieve. Let it out. Pour it out. But then rise and come into the future that the Lord is holding out to you. For he is the God who makes all things new.*

Peace in Christ,

Pastor Bear Clifton

Potpourri And Other Notes

And finally, our new logo...



BridgeWay Community Church

Making Disciples. Connecting Communities. Growing the Body of Christ.