



# FINDING FAITH IN THE FOG

---

2020

---

*I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough  
places into level ground. These are the things  
I do, and I do not forsake them.*

*Isaiah 42:16b*





REFLECTION ON 2020	4
PASTOR'S PAGE	6
2020 FALLING APART	8
2020 COMING TOGETHER	10
WEEKEND EXPERIENCE	14
WORSHIP CHRIST	15
OUTDOOR SERVICES	18
FAITH IN THE FOG TESTIMONIES	19
BAPTISMS	28
ANCHOR KIDS	30
ANCHOR STUDENTS	32
WORK FOR CHRIST	36
MISSIONS	40
STRATEGIC PARTNERS	42
OPERATIONS & FINANCES	43
MEMES OF THE YEAR	45





# Reflections

## ON 2020

If 2020 had a theme song, it would be, “The World Turned Upside Down,” an English Ballad composed in the 1640s. “Listen to me and you shall hear, news hath not been this thousand year: Since Herod, Caesar, and many more, you never heard the like before. Let’s be content, and the times lament, you see the world turn’d upside down.” Originally, the song served as a protest against Parliament’s anti-festive Christmas policies. Legend has it the British troops played this song after surrendering to Washington at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. In 2020, we saw our world turn upside down.

At first, we experienced the “great vanishing.” Everything was canceled—weddings, graduations, baseball seasons, first dates, vacations, birthday parties, Easter dinners, family reunions—months of civilization...vanished! Things weren’t happening. All at once, our congregation faced lockdowns, shopping shortages, store and restaurant closures, e-learning frustrations, financial uncertainty, looming unemployment, disruption in healthcare and political turmoil. Life, as we knew it, was over.

We had no playbook. Our tech team scrambled to produce weekly online services. Our kids’ ministry team began offering everything online and by mail. Our staff began offering daily webcasts to keep people connected, informed and engaged. We had online rallies for men and women, and our students met over Zoom on Sunday nights. Our staff and leaders collaborated to care for people and rearrange church routines while we tried to predict the future. We consulted with many other pastors and organizations on new policies and procedures. Our church was closed for 16 long weeks.

Then the pendulum swung, summer began, COVID cases subsided, and lockdowns lifted. We built a relaunch team in June and reopened the church in July. We tried new things like outdoor services and Backyard Kids Clubs. Somehow Silver Birch Ranch still successfully ran a family camp. But bad things continued to happen rapidly. We were caught in

a deluge of religious liberty battles, racial tensions, shocking videos, protests, riots, tragic altercations and intense scrutiny of law enforcement. The world had turned upside down... again.

Then came fall with its familiar routines, or so we expected. Children never fully returned to school consistently. Parents never found their rhythm because COVID cases surged higher than before, and Illinois led the nation in daily infections for several days. Thousands of people were suddenly, unexpectedly forced to quarantine for two long weeks because of exposure to COVID. Those suffering with other medical needs labored to secure the care they required. Then election season intensified, and it felt like someone poured gas on the fire.

Around Thanksgiving, eight members of our staff got COVID at the same time, so our church shut down for 3 more weeks. We reopened for Christmas and prayed the church wouldn’t catch fire on Christmas Eve. When Lauren and I pulled into the parking lot for the last Sunday service of the year, we feared COVID had one last trick up its sleeve, and it did! Lauren discovered a LIVE BAT on the floor upstairs during our kids’ program! After our security team escorted the bat to the parking lot, we finally crossed the finish line of the most disorienting year of our lives.

I’m proud of our staff, leaders and congregation for the determination, flexibility and endurance we displayed through it all. Every week we battled to provide the basics of life, faith and ministry. Some weeks we struggled to get back to square one. Other weeks, we celebrated unexpected “valley blessings” the Lord provided. During this unprecedented season of sickness, death, political turmoil and heated societal strife, we fixed our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and he sustained us in a world turned upside down.

*“When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.” Psalm 75:3.*







## A PERSONAL FAMILY

# Reflection

FROM PASTOR RYAN AND LAUREN



month of lockdown. I took Cassie to get her driver's license and spent hours waiting in line, in the cold, outside at the DMV. She finally emerged with her prize, but sadly she had nowhere to go and no one to see.

Easter is usually the biggest celebration of the year at church. We woke up, got dressed, watched church online together, and then went outside for pictures. Lauren made an Easter feast. It was great, but it was different.

Summer arrived, and things opened up a bit, but life was strange. I remember waiting in line outside of Target. Restaurants were all closed, and most stores remained closed. We went downtown on Memorial Day weekend, and saw only 4 cars parked in the lower Millennium Park garage with us. Chicago was a ghost town. One week later, the streets were ablaze as riots swept through the city because of racial tensions. Trouble spread all the way to the Menards where Ellie worked in Tinley. They closed the store, barricaded the front doors with pallets, and I went to pick her up early. We had many family conversations about racism and violence in America.

In June, the kids wore us down, and we joined the "pandemic puppy craze." Cosmo Koala Hall bounded into our home, with all of his golden doodle fluff. Thanks to his energy, our older dog, Spencer, lost 10 pounds (running from Cosmo) and is much healthier! Ellie finally returned to Shepard High School for graduation in July, which consisted of a brisk walk through the cafeteria, a quick picture in her gown, and then a polite escort back to the van.

Lauren and I celebrated our 20th Wedding Anniversary! We went to a fancy restaurant and exchanged gifts, but the trip we were planning would have to wait. Our family made the trek to Silver Birch Ranch for family camp—a long overdue retreat for rest and renewal. Church finally reopened, and we began reconnecting with the congregation. We signed Jared up for a makeshift baseball league, but it was different. Fields were overgrown, the concession stand was closed, the stands were sparse, and the boys were rusty.

We were on our way to Jackson, Tennessee in March to make our final visit to Union University with our daughter Ellie, when we first realized the world was changing rapidly because of a new virus called COVID-19. The University was in turmoil, and the campus was a ghost town as fear spread swiftly. On the drive home, we scrambled to plan our final church service before lockdown. Ellie had already purchased a prom dress and was anticipating her graduation ceremony. Little did she know, she had already attended her last day of high school.

The White House announced we would unify in quarantine as a nation in what was supposed to be "15 Days to Slow the Spread." Days turned into months as Governor Pritzker announced schools would remain closed indefinitely. The "fog" settled in. Jared's baseball team never met for spring training. Cassie couldn't go to work at her daycare anymore. Life stopped. Plans disappeared. E-learning was a total disaster.

When Cassie's "Sweet 16" birthday party was canceled in April, Lauren surprised her with a birthday scavenger hunt. We drove around to visit friends and family members, connecting with them on their driveways or in their garages. It was so awkward to see people (in their pajamas) after a

We drove Ellie to college in early August, and the other two kids returned to school a few weeks later—for 3 days. Then Jared was home again because of rising cases of COVID. We made a family visit to Ellie's college in late September. The day after we got back, Ellie developed COVID symptoms, and within the week, tested positive for the virus. That threw us into our first 14-day quarantine. I taught Men's Ministry live from my garage and recorded my Sunday sermon from our dining room table.

A few weeks later, Lauren and I traveled to Arizona for a Pastors' retreat. While we were gone, all 4 of our parents and our son Jared got COVID. Lauren returned home, and I stayed with a deacon for a week so I could continue to work. Once it became clear that 11 of our family members had COVID, I joined Lauren in quarantine...again.

I was so excited that we could finally return to worship on Sunday, November 15th. But the Friday before, we learned Pastor Mark tested positive for COVID! And our entire staff had been exposed, so we had to cancel live services and head back online for 3 weeks, and our family went back into quarantine for the 3rd time. I tested positive that week, and Lauren got COVID the following week. We had moderate symptoms—low-grade fevers and body aches, loss of taste and smell, sore throats, upset stomach, tremendous fatigue, brain fog, and headaches. We slowly recovered and planned to reunite as a staff on December 1st.

I woke up that morning and saw a text that read, "Mark came through surgery successfully. Sarah is on her way to see him." I was so confused. I scrolled through previous texts and saw one from Pastor Mark that said, "I'm at the hospital having a heart attack." In total disbelief, I woke Lauren up with the bombshell. We were devastated to learn how close our friend came to entering eternity, and we praised God for graciously sparing his life. We went by to visit him after he returned home. Mark and I ran marathons together, so it was sobering (and thrilling) to walk slowly around the block with him as he recovered.

The weekend after Thanksgiving, we went to buy our Christmas tree and learned there was a national tree shortage. We had to settle for the best tree Menards had to offer. But Christmas wasn't canceled by COVID. Wonder filled our hearts as we reflected on the love of Christ displayed in the manger. He stepped down into this dark and dangerous world, fully exposed to its peril, and he became a "man of sorrows." He was plunged into the darkness with us, but he arrived safely on his throne in the end, and he will reign forever!

On New Year's Eve, we counted down the last seconds of 2020 and cheered when it finally ended. Like an hourglass expired, every moment now rests in silence, with all of its mischief and malice and clamor frozen forever. But a new year has dawned, and we don't lose heart, because Jesus still shines on our dark and disorienting world from above with the divine light of heaven.





# Canceled

# Covid

# Social Distancing

# E-learning

# 2020 FALLING APART

# Social Upheaval

# Elections

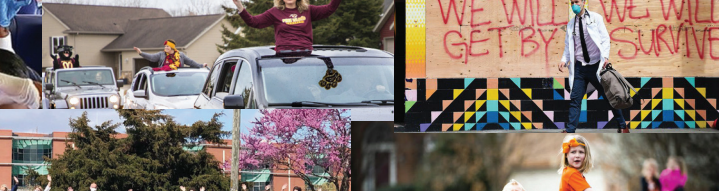
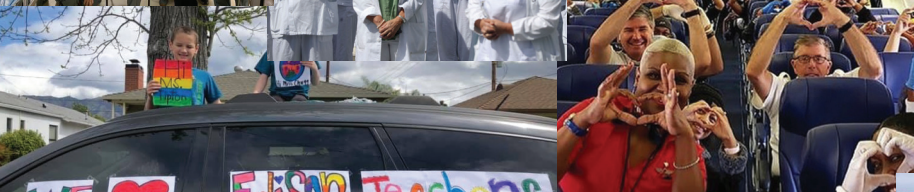
# Zoom Calls

# Lockdown





# HEROES



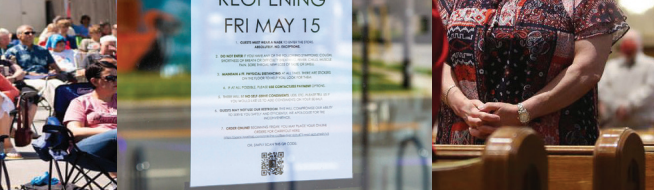
IT'S FINALLY 2021!

happy new year!

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appears.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

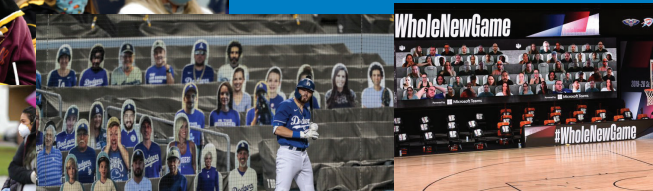


# PEACE



# 2020 COMING TOGETHER

# REGATHERING



# RECOVERY



# REOPENING







# 2020 TIMELINE



FIRST EMPTY-ROOM SERMON RECORDING



RELAUNCH TEAM MEETING 1



FIRST OUTDOOR SERVICE



LAST IN PERSON SERVICE



ONLINE GOOD FRIDAY



RELAUNCH TEAM MEETING 2



RELAUNCH LIVE SERVICES



GATHER AND GROW BEGINS



LIVE SERVICES CANCELED FOR 3 WEEKS

3/15

3/19

3/20

3/22

4/10

4/12

6/14

6/15

6/21

6/28

7/12

7/20-21, 28-29

8/2

9/13

9/15

9/16

9/20

10/11

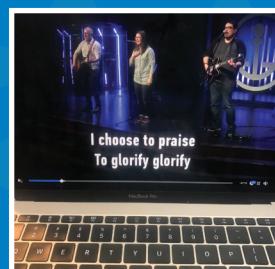
11/15

12/6

ONLINE EASTER



SERVICE ONLINE ONLY



RELAUNCH FULL RUN THROUGH



OUTDOOR 11TH BIRTHDAY SERVICE WITH BAPTISMS



AWANA RELAUNCHES



CHURCH REOPENS/ ADVENT BEGINS



SHIFTING ONLINE - REHEARSAL & RECORDING



PASTOR THOMAS JOINS AS STUDENT PASTOR



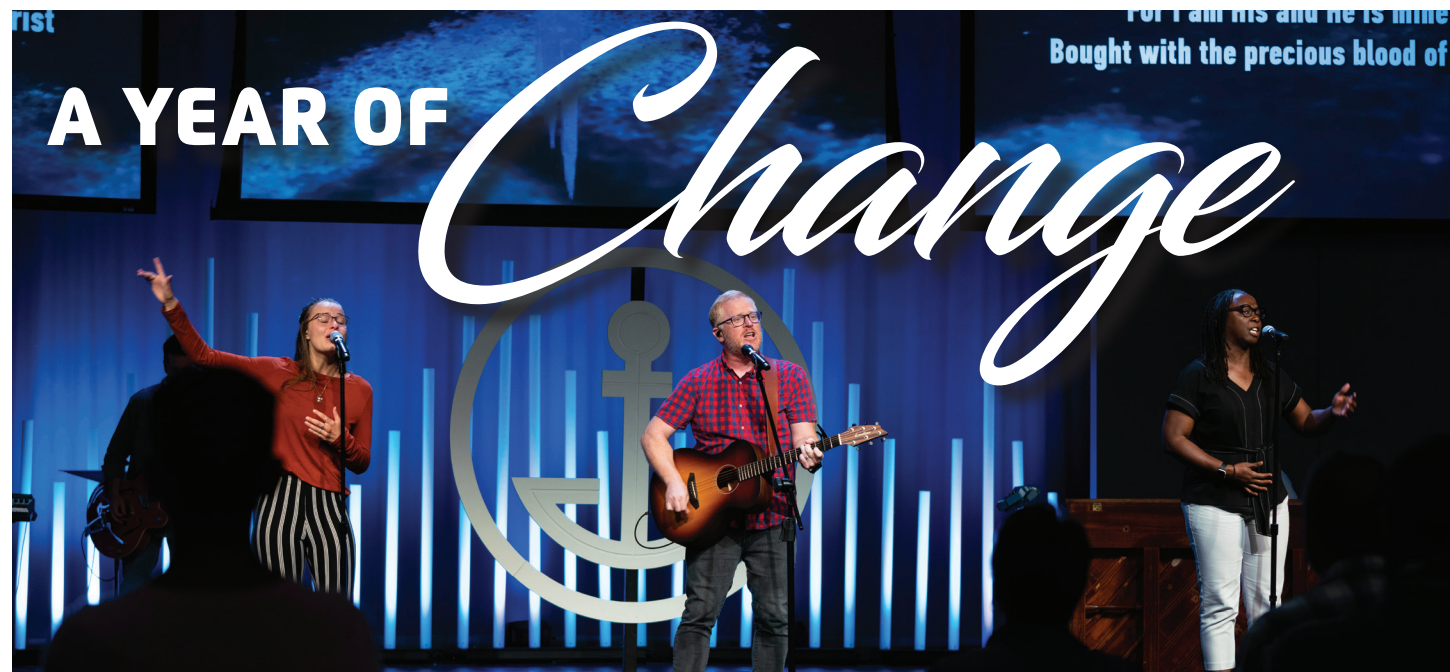
BACKYARD KID'S CLUB



EVENING OUTDOOR PRAISE & WORSHIP SERVICE







## TOP 5 WORSHIP SONGS

- 1 YES I WILL
- 2 RAISE A HALLELUJAH
- 3 GOODNESS OF GOD
- 4 KING OF GLORY
- 5 HERE'S TO THE ONE

 **89 SONGS**  
**18 NEW**

 **51 VOLUNTEERS**  
**7 NEW**



When the world shut down, the tech team went into overdrive! We had already been doing a livestream weekly, but when we made the decision to pre-record and post it online, our roles had to change. I, personally, had to grow my skill in video capture and editing.

-Charlton Young

Having to record services brought a new level of nerves that I was not familiar with. We did a recording for a Christmas service a few years ago but that was it. After rehearsal on Thursday nights, it took me a long time to stop saying, "See you Sunday!" It was a different rhythm and a weird feeling to be "done" serving for the week on Thursday night. But we were still able to worship as a team and provide the church with something to help them worship and grow at home. I learned you can worship anywhere, regardless of where you are at, physically and spiritually.

-Tim Tesauro

Throughout 2020, God showed me tenderness, compassion, and forgiveness like I've never experienced. He showed me the frailty of life and how desperate this world is for him, from the saved, to the unsaved. There is very real need for him, everywhere. I was able to see our people with different eyes and just let go and worship Christ. I was able to look at serving as not just serving, but a chance to love people during this time, offering them a small gift in the storm of events.



-Maureen D'Ambrosia



# Worship

## AND TECH TEAM INNOVATION

The year began like any other, the Worship and Tech Team entered the new year as normal. Then everything came to a screeching halt when the world began to rapidly shutdown for COVID-19. The week after March 15th, our tech team flew into action, preparing to create an online worship service. We updated our website and had to launch our new Anchor Church app a month early, in order to help our church go fully online. The authorities said there would be 2 weeks of shut down. We anticipated being back in person for Easter. Two weeks turned into 16 weeks of remote services as lockdowns were extended.



On Thursday, March 19th, the worship team rehearsed at 7pm and immediately turned around and recorded the worship set at 8pm. Pastor Ryan preached his first sermon to an empty room. Our tech volunteers took all the files and created a fully produced worship service video. Our first Sunday online, March 22, Facebook crashed due to the overwhelming amount of churches going live. We were glad we chose to pre-record our services as opposed to trying to livestream.

When it became obvious that we would continue to be on lockdown through Easter, the creative planning team went to work, researching ways to make the online Good Friday and Easter services special. Everyone worked really hard to innovate, learning as we went. We collected videos from

families in our church greeting people with "Happy Easter!" It was great to see some familiar faces from afar as we celebrated Easter in a drastically different way.

In June, as we began to prepare to regather in person, our Worship and Tech Team had to adapt again. Not only would we be pre-recording our services for online attendees, but we would now be leading worship in person as well. We built our YouTube channel and learned new technology. Our worship team continued to record on Thursday evenings and then came back on Sunday morning to lead in person. It was strange to lead our church as they wore masks. We couldn't see faces, but we were so glad to be back together.

In August, we held our first outdoor worship service! We were amazed to see so many people come and worship together in the open air. It was so great to have the church back together. We celebrated our 11th Anniversary as a church at our 2nd outdoor service including the outdoor baptism of 7 individuals. We had an evening praise and worship service under the stars! What a testimony of God's faithfulness.

The Worship and Tech Team worked hard throughout all the ups and downs of 2020 to lead our people in worship. We asked a lot of them this year, but they rose to the challenge, and our church was blessed by their leadership.







# EASTER



Good Friday and Easter took on new meaning this year as we worshiped in quarantine at home. Never before has it been so obvious that the body of Christ isn't just a building. As Matthew 18:20 says, "Wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I am with them." Families and individuals celebrated Christ's resurrection without a big wild celebration. There was no confetti, no light show... just quiet, calm moments where we were reminded of the nearness of our Lord wherever we are. Even in quarantine, our Lord is there. He was able to meet us in new and powerful ways as the usual distractions and hurry of the day were stripped away.

The Worship and Tech Team worked hard to make the recorded Good Friday and Easter services a celebration of Christ. The Good Friday service took on a somber tone as we remembered Jesus' death. On Easter, we were greeted by church members proclaiming "Happy Easter!" with great fanfare to start the service. Some of our frontline workers read from Luke 24, we worshipped, raising a hallelujah in celebratory remembrance and hope, partook of communion each in his own home, and Pastor Ryan preached about the free gift of eternal life from Ephesians 2. Families were encouraged to dress up and make it a special day, despite the quarantine.



# CHRISTMAS

Advent was a joyous month of celebration. Our theme was "He Shall Reign Forever." Despite the bleak landscape of the pandemic, we looked ahead with great hope to our eternity with the King of Kings. Each week we focused our hearts on one of the Advent themes: Faith, Peace, Joy, and Hope. We lit candles, and we were challenged through readings, songs, and preaching to carry the weekly theme with us throughout the week. In a time where gatherings and visits with friends were limited, the stage design team

sought to turn our worship center into a place of warm welcome, inviting everyone into the house of the Lord for nostalgic worship celebrations each week. The Christmas Eve services were magical nights of a cappella carols sung by candlelight. We focused on how our Savior descended from Heaven to live as a human and die as a criminal, so that he could rise again and reign forever as the King, creating a way for us to spend eternity with him. "He Shall Reign Forever," and because of that, we have hope!







# OUTDOOR SERVICES



# OUTDOOR SERVICES







# Faith IN THE Fog

## WALK WITH CHRIST TESTIMONIES



Ileana Torres

This past year was one of the most challenging years of my life. I had a baby during a global pandemic. When everything shut down in March, at the start of the pandemic, I was 5 months pregnant. My main concern was for my family's health and for the health of my baby. It seemed my worry and fear went into overdrive. Everything became a big deal and a little more complicated; going to the doctor for prenatal appointments, getting groceries, work, and not being able to visit family and friends. I

leaned in and prayed hard for the Lord to keep my family and friends safe and healthy.

As the days went on and we started to countdown to the baby's birth, we knew things would be different. This time, there would be no support at the hospital other than my husband, no visitors, no celebrations, an extra isolated postpartum, and separation from loved ones. This is not how we wanted things to be, but we knew God had a plan and that he would be with us through it all, no matter how challenging it would be. In addition to the emotional effects of the pandemic, both my son and I were experiencing some physical issues after the birth. After four ER visits and 3 hospitalizations between Benny and me, I started to wonder where God was in all of this, and why this was happening on top of dealing with a pandemic. I fell into a deep depression and was having constant panic attacks. I had never dealt with postpartum depression and anxiety, and I felt as if my body had turned against me. Depression and anxiety also have a tricky way of making you feel utterly alone.

Over the next days, I was reminded that I was not alone, and that the Lord was with me on this journey. I had to remember that my ways are not God's ways, that there is nothing too hard for the Lord, and that I had to trust Him with my life. That is when I surrendered all the pain, sadness, and anxiety over to the Lord knowing that he was big enough to hold it all. I had to accept what was happening to me and I had to rely on Him for healing. I had to say, like one of my favorite songs says, "So be it Lord. Should you lead me to the desert or the storms that I can't weather that brings me to my knees. So be it Lord, I'll find you're all I've ever needed cause you'll meet me on my knees and I'll rise up once again."

I slowly began to feel better over the next few months, and I give all the glory to God. He opened doors for different types of support, treatments, and provided for my family when I could not take care of them. He began to heal me even when I thought I would never be the same. I am eternally grateful for this past year, hard days, and all.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." *Proverbs 3:5-6*



Adrienne Seiber

As a police officer in 2020, my faith was, is, and continues to be tested in the area of what I allow my mind to dwell on. I had to choose to tune out all of the negativity I heard and felt. On my way to work, I began using my commute as a time to pray, out loud, alone in my car. On the way home, I'd listen to scripture. My faith, my relationship with God, and my peace of mind has grown because of the difficulties in 2020.



Brandon Kirkilas

Being literally surrounded by COVID at the hospital where I work as a nurse has been trying. It has shown me that James 4:14 is more true than ever. "We are but a mist here for a short while then vanish." We don't know when that time will come, but we need to use the precious time we have to bring God his due glory.



Ben Wessels

As a business owner, COVID made 2020 a challenge in ways I never anticipated. Overnight, I went from planning for our best year yet (we were set to hire 400+ people in 2020) to deciding if I needed to sell my house to save the company. There was a time in the spring that we were weighing either laying off hundreds of people or just shutting down. Either way, many people would be hurt. But God showed up in a big way, moments before disaster - and we've come through stronger on the other side. It still hurt, but we made it through, which is a miracle considering where things were headed. I'm grateful that God had a plan that didn't include me losing my house - but his plan did include reminding me that I'm not in control. He used this time to ask, "Who are you without the business?", "Do you really trust me to provide?" and "What's behind all that worry?" Even in the pursuit of something good, we can lose sight of the bigger picture. If you find yourself constantly chasing more or worrying about your own bottom line, read Deuteronomy 8 and be reminded that if the thing that lifts your heart is "building a good house" or "multiplying your silver and gold", you might be off course. God wants good things for us and he calls us to be good stewards of what we have, but we cannot forget that it's all his and he is in control. Deut. 8:17 tells us, "Beware lest you say in your heart 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth'. Trust in his eternal provision, not the stockpile that you can't take with you.







# Faith IN THE Fog

## MARK BOYS



My mind was surprisingly calm as I lay on the operating table staring up at bright lights, a machine whirring over my body taking HD video of my heart. The pain in my chest was so intense I was pounding the sides of the table and curling my toes tightly. My right arm was strapped to a padded extension and shielded from my view. Doctors and nurses quickly moved in and out of the operating room preparing for surgery. "I can't believe this is happening to me," I thought. "I'm having a heart attack."

Looking back now, it feels like a dream. In mid-November, I tested positive for COVID-19 and, along with my wife and kids, experienced moderate symptoms that kept us in bed for the better part of 2 weeks. We felt awful, but assumed that it would pass and we would be ready to celebrate Thanksgiving together as a family. On November 27th, Black Friday, I started experiencing chest pains and numbness in my hands, and during a nap had a strange dream where I was having a heart attack. I thought that was weird, and I decided to call my doctor to tell him my symptoms. He instructed me to get a blood test on Monday to check for a pulmonary embolism. The blood test came back negative for a lung clot. I went to bed that night feeling relieved and fell into a deep sleep. Just before 3AM, Tuesday morning, my daughter Karis woke Sarah and me up to tell us that her tummy hurt. As soon as I heard her voice, I felt a heavy pain in the center of my

chest. "I need to go to the hospital," I thought. "I'm having a heart attack."

I walked downstairs to take some aspirin, and the pain began escalating dramatically. I clutched at my chest, fell to the ground and began groaning. I decided to take a shower. When I stepped under the water, I collapsed again. Sitting there looking up at the ceiling, I panicked and cried out in my heart, "Jesus I need you to save me!" I was able to crawl out of the shower and Sarah, who had heard me banging around downstairs, found me looking as pale as a sheet. After a few anxious minutes of conversation about what I was feeling, we decided we needed to go to



the hospital.

Sarah pulled into the Emergency Room drop-off. We looked at each other and said, "I love you." I stepped out of the car and walked into the Emergency Room. As I walked in, my chest exploded in pain. An experienced EKG technician, named Darlene, saw I was in trouble and immediately helped me into a small room to test my heart. I collapsed on the bed in the room, and Darlene began praying for me. "God, I need to get a good picture of this man's heart. Help me, Lord." When the test results printed, she quietly said, "Mr. Boys, we are going to get you right upstairs."

Within minutes, I was wheeled into the ER, where a handful of nurses and doctors hooked me up to an IV, drew blood, and asked me a hundred questions. After consulting the EKG, one of the doctors came up to me and

said, "Mr. Boys, you are having a heart attack. We are going to stabilize you and then take you to have a procedure called an angioplasty." A nurse sprayed nitroglycerin under my tongue, while another pumped morphine into my IV. I quickly typed out a text message to several people, including Sarah. "I am having a heart attack," was all it said. I was moved out of the ER and into the cath lab, where 2 nurses got me onto an operating table and began prepping me for surgery. The cardiologist walked into the room and calmly explained how he was going to thread wires through a vein in my wrist up into my heart and fix the problem. The pain was excruciating, and when a nurse walked past me, I grabbed her hand. She stopped and patiently waited as tears rolled down my cheeks. When I regained my composure, she quietly moved on with her work.





As I lay on the table watching the machine whirl above my body, I was calm, focused, and at peace. I talked freely with God about many things. In those moments, I experienced an intimacy with my Heavenly Father that was just as real as the pain in my chest. Everything was stripped away and it was just me and God. I knew how sinful I am and how holy God is. I knew that I needed a Savior, and that it is Jesus. I surrendered my life again to God, praying the words of Psalm 31, "Into your hands I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God." I sensed the Spirit teach me in that moment that there is no safer place to be than in God's hands. It's not a "last-gasp shot at the buzzer" kind of move. It's the move of a lifetime. And I also prayed, "Jesus, I want to live and live and live." And in that moment I knew it wasn't too late. There was time right there and then, even in what could be my final moments,

to die to myself and live in Christ. The words of Jesus in John 11 came into my mind, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Yes, Jesus, I believe.

The doctors and nurses worked quickly to discover the problem and found that my artery - the one called, "the widow-maker" was 100% blocked. They performed an angioplasty to clear the blockage. They discovered 2 blood clots and inserted 2 stents into the artery to keep it open. After the surgery, the cardiologist said to me, "I am glad you're alive. A lot of people don't survive this heart attack."

I spent two days in recovery in the ICU, and was released home. Coming home to Sarah and our kids, I was overwhelmed to hear how people from our church

had supported our family from the very first moments of my heart attack. Sarah told me that people from church immediately responded with support, prayer and encouragement. Sharon Parney came to the house and read scripture with Sarah. Mike Kijowski prayed with her on the phone. People in our church prayed with great intensity and God answered their prayers! Families began dropping off meals and groceries. Pastor Ryan and Lauren prayed with us, visited us, bought us groceries, and loved our children. God gave us an abundance of blessings in our crisis, and we believe that this is working together for our good and His glory.



The main concern as I was leaving the hospital was that my heart was pumping at a much lower rate. We needed to see the heart improve its strength in order to avoid heart failure. It would likely take several months for that to happen. God clearly worked again, because when we visited the cardiologist a week later, my heart had recovered and was functioning normally. Because my daughter woke me up, I was alive. Because we got to the hospital so quickly, my heart wasn't damaged permanently. Because of the doctors, nurses and technicians at Christ Hospital, I received the best care possible in record time. When I explained all this to the



cardiologist, he said with conviction, "God saved your life."

Our family is so grateful to God for his mercy. It's clear that I should have died on December 1, but God intervened to save me. I did nothing to earn it, and all I can do is worship my Heavenly Father with a thankful heart. We are so grateful that God has given us a church family who showed us the love of Jesus in this time. It is humbling to receive so much help and support. We want to thank you for loving us, praying with us, and supporting us. You are a gift, and so is this life we get to live. Every day is full of opportunities to live as lights in this dark world, pointing people who are suffering and struggling to Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life.







# Faith IN THE Fog

## MIKE & TERRY KIJOWSKI



The first few months of 2020 were very busy. We were finishing up our time serving in Romania and several churches throughout Romania had invited us to lead sessions on Marriage, Parenting and Children's Ministry. In addition, Mike had invitations to preach and Terry was the speaker for the International Day of Women at a church in Bucharest. God was using us and stretching us in a good way.



On March 11th, we heard that the Romanian government was closing schools and businesses due to COVID-19. On March 12th, friends called to tell us that the US was closing its border to flights from Europe the next day! We purchased flights, packed what clothes we could and fled like refugees early the next morning. No flights had been allowed to land at our local airport for the previous two days. But that morning, the only flight that was allowed to land was the very one we needed to depart on. Our flight arrived at O'Hare 30 minutes before the March 13 deadline.

Once home in Chicago, our lives hit the brakes with a 14-day quarantine. Terry and I had hoped to work at the christian clinic where we worked for over 25 years, but because of

COVID, all routine exams were put on hold and so were we. We suddenly found ourselves with time on our hands. This meant more time to study God's Word and to pray. It also meant more time with one another and with our young adult children. Sometimes the house got "too small." Over time, eating dinner together every night began to change us. We started to read the Bible together as a family once a week. This helped us appreciate and respect one another's differences



during a politically charged time in our nation and in our home.

Just before the pandemic, Pastor Dave moved to Minnesota, and Pastor Ryan invited Mike to serve as Interim Pastor at Anchor Church. It has proved to be the best 24/7 part-time job Mike has ever had! In time, Terry began to work as a dialysis nurse and our lives began to get busy again. Yet through the pandemic, God has taught us to slow down and treasure our time with him, with one another, and with our family.

We don't know what the Lord has in store for us next, but our hope is in Jesus, and we know that our loving Father is in complete control. Our prayer is that the Lord will use it to bring him great glory!

“

**Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.**

*Isaiah 41:10*



# Faith IN THE Fog

## WALK WITH CHRIST TESTIMONIES



**LaWanda Bishop**

On March 13th, Kipling School's 265 students and 43 staff members began remote learning due to COVID-19, uncertain of how long they would be home. Several of my teachers and staff expressed feelings of being overwhelmed. Sometimes, staff meetings would end with prayers for peace and protection. Just when we were finding our rhythm with remote learning, May ended with the killing of George Floyd, civil unrest and with my students having many questions and emotions about an 8 minute and 46 second video. As the school principal, there were times when I felt weary and alone with everyone expecting me to address problems in an ever-shifting landscape. This uncharted territory left me feeling angry and helpless and tired of what I was seeing and hearing. There were many times when it was even difficult for me to pray. I read in Proverbs 12:25 that "anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." So I began to post Bible verses in my office that encouraged me. With all that is going on, I still feel frustrated and even angry at times, but I know I can look to God's Word for comfort and encouragement. Reflecting on who God is reminds me that he is in control even when things appear out of control.

**Al Huizinga**

During the pandemic, God has been teaching me to live according to Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."

**Mary Huizinga**

In this challenging season of the pandemic, racial injustice and political division, I think God is teaching me a lot - or patiently trying to teach me. Most of the lessons land on giving up control. God is God and I am not. I need to trust him and lean on him because he is faithful, loving, and good.

**Dennis Parney**

The early part of April 2020, Pastor Ryan, Lauren and Pastor Mark devoted a great deal of time over Facebook Live giving us spiritual thoughts about our "New Life." The three segments during the week helped my spirit stay in a vertical position.

**Sharon Parney**

Trusting in God's faithfulness and leaning on the love I know He has for me and those I love, blessed me with a spirit of thankfulness and peace as we navigated this most challenging year.

**Hector Campos**

I believe God is teaching me to truly love and trust him with every part of me (mind, body and soul) and every area of my life (marriage, ministry and money).





# BAPTISMS



**Evie Buck**

"After my mom passed away when I was 11, I fell away from the faith for a very long time. When a few friends asked me about what I believed, I wasn't able to rationalize what I believed in at the time. I later felt convicted to ask God for forgiveness."



**Chloe Torres**

"When my sister got baptized, I realized I wanted the same relationship with Jesus that my family has. So I asked Jesus to come into my heart and forgive my sins. I want to be baptized to show Jesus how much I love him and that I want to follow him."



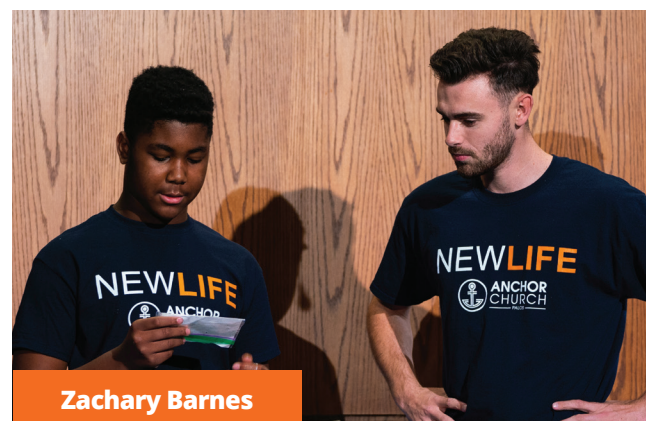
**David Lagger**

"I was raised in a Christian home and made numerous professions of faith while I was growing up. I started to believe in Jesus on my own. My journey to full surrender to Jesus Christ has been a long rough road. But it wasn't until recently that I started to live in that surrender and live according to God's word."



**April Huff**

"In a recent Bible study, I was challenged to research my views about baptism. I found a few powerful quotes about faith and baptism. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he died on the cross to take away all my sins, and that he alone can lead me to heaven."



**Zachary Barnes**

"When I first started praying to God, it was usually things about my day. But after more church services and praying to God, I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior."

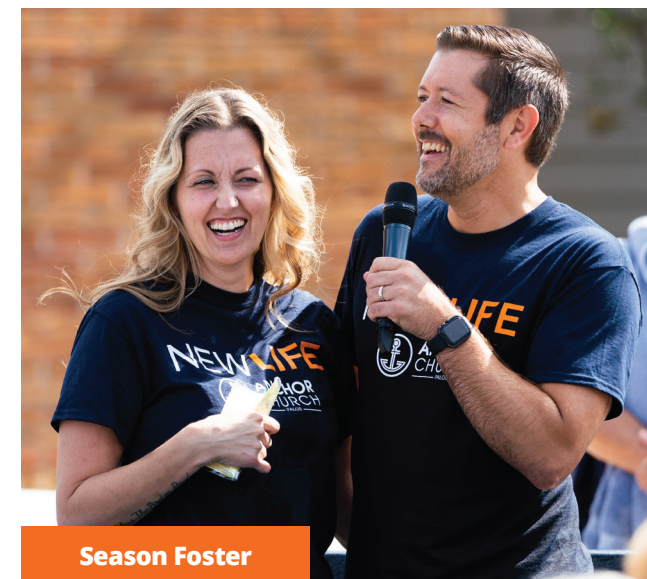


**Andrew Barnes**

"I grew up going to Awana. One night, when the gospel was presented, I realized I needed a Savior. I went home I asked Jesus to be my Savior."



# BAPTISMS



**Season Foster**

"I was raised in the Catholic Church but never really understood it or accepted it. During an uncertain time in my life, my old wedding song came across my feed. It led me to the song, 'The God Who Stays.' That was the moment that brought me to my knees and made me realize I needed Jesus in my life. My brother Ryan helped me understand that God has never left me. God will stay and he will run in my direction, even when the whole world walks away, just like that song I heard that changed my life."



**Julie Twohill**

"I began a journey of learning about my Savior when I was a child. When I was in college, I started feeling God's presence and love like I had never felt it before. Though I know I've sinned often over the years, I know God has never abandoned me because I am his and he loves me."



**Carter Sheehan**

"When I was in college, I started to learn more about Jesus and what it truly means to have a relationship with him. Now that I have gotten to know him, I've been able to say no to the sins that were crowding my life and connect with God in a way I never thought possible before."



**Anthony Iovinelli**

"I grew up going to church. 14 years ago, a good friend of mine really showed me the way to Jesus, and now I'm ready to dedicate my life to Christ and get baptized."



**Rochelle Iovinelli**

"In October 2018, I was on my way to work, listening to a sermon, and I knew that day that I needed to completely surrender my life to Christ. I pulled my car over and asked Jesus to come into my heart. He's been living in my heart ever since."





# ADULT MINISTRY

## GATHER AND GROW

In the fall of 2020, Small Groups were placed on pause and a new ministry model was born: "Gather and Grow." This model allowed us to provide in-person and online discipleship simultaneously. We were able to centralize leadership, help families with childcare issues and maintain healthy attendance regardless of changing circumstance due to COVID-19. Men and women met on alternating Tuesday evenings to explore the spiritual implications of our "New Normal - Finding Faith in the Fog."



## WOMEN'S MINISTRY

2020 was a highly transitional year in Women's Ministry. The year began with a change in leadership, with me stepping back into the role of Director. Kim Lang faithfully led this ministry for 5 years, and the church was strengthened and blessed by her leadership and love for the Lord. The leader team was also in a state of transition, and by March it was evident that an entire team needed to be raised up. That was of course also the beginning of COVID, which changed the process and plans quite a bit. Despite the obstacle of a pandemic and the ever-changing guidelines and timelines, several women stepped up to create a new Women's Ministry Team. This included Heidi Jasien, Heidi Sebestyen, Ileana Torres, Joy Conrady, Meghan Terpstra and Alyssa Wessels. The team has been flexible and willing to try new things to minister to the women of Anchor Church through the pandemic.

One of the greatest ministry initiatives to come out of the pandemic was the development of Gather and Grow. Women were able to join Gather Nights in-person or online to be encouraged and challenged through worship, Bible teaching, prayer and community building. Through Grow Groups, women were able to build authentic community with one another, sharing burdens and joys as well as providing accountability for being in the Word and developing stronger prayer lives.

We also completed 3 Bible studies this year. In the spring, we offered "Ephesians" by Denise Hughes and "Finding God Faithful" by Kelly Minter, and this fall we offered "Discerning the Voice of God" by Priscilla Shirer. It was encouraging to see many women commit to studying the Word when it would have been easy to shift into neutral.

In a year when so many things were shaken, we can reflect on it with gratitude, seeing that God has proven himself to be faithful, powerful, and always at work in his church.



# ANCHOR KIDS



The first thing that comes to mind upon reflecting on 2020 is gratitude for a team that was willing to be so flexible! Our Anchor Kids team was cut in half when we resumed services in June, and the volunteers who were able to return came back with such willingness to embrace whatever role was most needed. Many volunteers started serving with age groups that were new to them, and a few stepped up for the first time as teachers or worship leaders. Heidi Jasien did a great job as worship coordinator, creating videos for families to be able to have meaningful virtual worship. Laurie Webb was a blessing to the team, coming on in July, with a willingness to become a worship leader and serve every Sunday. One of our most reliable volunteers, Sam Bonnell said, "Being able to serve every 2 weeks in Kids' Ministry has been a blessing. Less time off in between serving on Sundays allows me to stay more in tune with the lessons. It's also great to see the kids more often and have more opportunities to connect with them."

As we came to the realization in

the spring that we would not be able to meet in person for several weeks, Sara and I put together a list of all the families with children in Anchor Kids. Every time we started a new unit, we put together packets of curriculum resources to mail out to the families so the kids would still have access to the same wonderful materials from The Gospel Project that they were used to. We also began creating live teaching videos and worship videos to go along with the printed material. Through those efforts and the videos provided by The Gospel Project, we have been so pleased with the resources made available to the families of Anchor Church. Parents were able to disciple their kids at home and continue using the same dynamic curriculum.

On Easter, we went door to door delivering special Easter packets of lesson materials, crafts and goodies to let the kids know we were thinking of them and missed them. Everyone was able to focus on what really matters... that Jesus 'has risen, as he said.'

One of the most difficult adjustments that came with the pandemic was

scaling back the events we typically offer for kids. By May, we knew that our usual Vacation Bible School program was not going to work, so we did some research and decided Backyard Kids Clubs was a doable alternative. This program allowed individual families to host a small gathering of children in their yards where we taught the Bible, sang worship songs, played games and did crafts. Even with the limitations we encountered, we had a lot of visitors, the kids all had a blast, and the gospel was clearly shared. We are so thankful for the 10 families who were willing to open their yards to allow kids to hear important gospel lessons. We know that God planted seeds in the hearts of many kids through Backyard Kids Clubs! In October, we offered a Family Fall Fest with the intention of holding the entire



event outside. The weather had other ideas, though, so at the last minute, we moved most of the games and crafts and food inside. Everyone was willing to roll with the changes, and the parents and kids who attended had a great time playing games, doing crafts like pumpkin painting, and using the inflatable axe-throwing game and inflatable slide. It was the perfect way to allow families to have fun in a challenging season.





# ANCHOR KIDS



# AWANA

63 Weekly Attendance

Awana is grounded in the gospel and focused on Bible literacy and we also make sure to bring the fun! From relays and games in the gym, to dressing like a superhero, to bringing friends on sports jersey night, we want the kids to have a blast every time they show up. We even had a jelly bean night! One of our favorite events in Feb. 2020 was 'P4'—Parents, Praise, Prayer and Pie night. Families came together to worship and pray, and then devoured pies from Orland Bakery...yum!

In March, we were off to the races with everyone's favorite event of the year, the Awana Grand Prix! The kids once again showed off their exceptional talents in both design and speed. T&T clubber Lilliana made a car that actually looked like an order of McDonald's french fries!



Not only did we have a ton of fun, but kids were memorizing verses, opening their Bibles and learning what it means to have a relationship with Christ! I remember one week the worship was so contagious that an impromptu dance party broke out. The kids love worshiping Jesus!

Then, everything stopped... abruptly. Quarantined. Now what? How do you run a program for 80 kids during a pandemic? We brainstormed and got creative, and came up with some ideas to stay connected. We created a few game videos for the kids to play at home with their parents. Kids were able to keep up with their handbook at home, and 15 kids managed to complete their handbooks and earn their book awards, despite the challenges. Unfortunately, there was no big celebration or ceremony to end the year, but leaders were able to deliver awards to the homes of most of the children.

Even after a year filled with unexpected obstacles, there is still so much to be thankful for! Every week God's word was hidden in the hearts of every child who attended, relationships were built and the truth was proclaimed! I'm so thankful for all the leaders who showed up week after week to pour into our kids, listen to them, encourage them and point them to Jesus! I am blessed to have been able to serve as Awana Director for two years and have loved

serving as games leader this fall under Sara P.

After faithfully serving as Awana director for 2 years, Cassandra Becker passed the baton to Sara Piwowarski in the fall of 2020, much like in the relay races the kids play around the Awana circle. It takes strong leaders to guide our volunteers and children, and we are thankful for the ways both of these women have poured into our Awana program.

In the early months of 2020, when I began shadowing Cass to take over as Awana Director in the fall of 2020, I never would have imagined that things would have been this different! Thankfully, our God knew exactly what was to come. Being able to serve on the Awana team for the 2019-2020 year gave me an opportunity to learn how to handle the unexpected and unpredictable events that can sometimes occur. We were so thankful to be able to launch the 2020-2021 Awana year this Fall, despite the ongoing pandemic restrictions. In fact, we were surprised and blessed to see an increase in enrollment! It's been exciting to have new families join us. One new family began bringing their daughter after she attended one of our VBS programs. Even though she had never heard about AWANA before this year, she quickly caught up to the other children in her verse memorization and in her workbook.

Our volunteer team continues to be a source of enthusiasm and faithful service. We have seasoned leaders who have taken on bigger rolls and new leaders who jumped into action. Some of our Awana graduates returned this year as Junior Leaders to help make an impact on the next generation. The whole team has been working hard together to keep one another healthy and safe. All the children have been busy learning and memorizing God's word, playing fun games and enthusiastically worshiping our God! We are looking forward to all that God does as we continue this program!







# PASTOR THOMAS & LAURIE

In January 2020, I was a college senior sitting next to Laurie as we planned the biggest year of our lives. We had so much ahead of us—graduating college, getting married, moving, and starting a new job! But little did we know exactly what God had in store for us over those next few months...

I began looking for youth pastor jobs. Over the course of the next few weeks, I applied to approximately 80 different churches. I came across the Anchor Church ad for student pastor in early February. I looked at the website, read the doctrinal statement, and decided I would apply. After finding the application on the website, I decided to put off applying because the application was so tedious. However, when the ad came around again a few days later, I knew I had to fill out the application and send it in.

I heard from Pastor Ryan a few days after submitting the application, and we set up a phone interview. The interview process began really well. Pastor Ryan and Lauren planned for Laurie and me to visit the church toward the end of March, but that is when catastrophe struck. Within just a few days of the phone interview, our college closed down, our wedding plans were put on pause, our graduation was canceled, and the opportunity to visit Anchor Church was pushed back as well. It was during this uncertain time that Laurie and I were shown God's goodness and provision in our lives.

March and April were beyond crazy months for Laurie and me. It seemed as if every day, one of our wedding plans had to be changed. Everything we tried to plan just got ruined, and it seemed like everything that could go wrong, went wrong. Because of the pandemic, some of the church opportunities that once had been available to me were no longer available. The reality of Laurie and me getting married and me not having a job was a very real fear of mine. It was during these months that we had to truly learn to trust and rely on God's provision and His plan for us.

May arrived, I graduated college and Laurie finished up her junior year. We ended up moving our wedding date up two days due to many unforeseen circumstances, which we now see as blessings in disguise. God blessed us in letting all of the details of our wedding still come together, just as perfectly as we had hoped for! We were still able to keep our venue, photographer, florist, bakery, seamstress, and videographer. After all of that fell into place, we were able to see how God was good and provided for us through it all, even when we did not fully understand what he was doing.

Shortly after our wedding, the Lord allowed us to come

up and visit Pastor Ryan and the Anchor Church family. During our first trip to Chicago, we were introduced to Chicago deep dish pizza, Portillo's, downtown Chicago, and many of the wonderful Anchor Church members. God made it clear that this is where He was calling us. A few days after we returned home, Pastor Ryan offered me the job of Student Pastor. Laurie and I were grateful and immediately accepted the job. Two weeks later, we packed all that we had and moved up to the suburbs of Chicago.

Overall, when Laurie and I look back on 2020, we continually see evidence of the goodness of God and his provision in our lives and we are so thankful! This year brought a whole new meaning to the phrase "20-20 vision." We think we can see things perfectly, but the truth is we never know what lies ahead. For us, we'd say that our hindsight vision is 20-20, because looking back on everything that happened, God's presence and provision was abundantly clear.







# ANCHOR STUDENTS



There is nothing better than serving Jesus. After six short months of working with the students of Anchor Church, my heart is filled with a joy that only flows from following and serving Christ. God is truly blessing and working in our student ministry. Over the past six months, God has blessed us with 92 different students who have attended at least one of our meetings. That means 92 different students got to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have seen three students and one of our leaders, Evie, follow the Lord in believer's baptism. Evie recently accepted Christ as her Savior, and now wants to serve the Lord any way possible, including on our Anchor Students leader team.

I have gone through two sermon series with the students this past semester. We started with a sermon series entitled, "What is the Gospel?" where students were able to

hear exactly what the gospel is and who they are in Christ because of the gospel. In October, I started a second series about the life of Christ through the book of John, entitled "Who is Jesus?" The goal of this series is that the students grow in their love for Jesus and desire to serve him as they learn more about him.

One of my favorite memories from this year took place this summer. I asked one of our students, "On a scale of 1-10, how is your relationship with Jesus?" He gave me a pretty high number. While out fishing together a few days later, he said, "Thomas, the other day when you asked me about my relationship with Jesus, I lied to you. Really, my relationship with Jesus right now is like a 1. But I want to start having a relationship with Jesus." Over the next few weeks, we read through the gospel of John together and he

would tell me what he was learning. It is so exciting to watch God work in the hearts of our students.

We also got to have some pretty awesome teen activities. We had 60 students come and jump around with us at SkyZone. We went out and enjoyed a beautiful fall evening at a corn maze where Rich Stone and I did our best to hide in the corn and scare the students. We hosted GlowNite, where we lit up the gym in blacklight. We also had a Fall Festival, complete with apple cider, pumpkin painting, scarecrow building contests, and tons of candy. We ended the year off with a Christmas Party with Christmas cookies and Taco Bell tacos. Nothing says "Student Christmas party" like Taco Bell!

We have twelve student ministry leaders this year, four of whom are serving for the first time. Our leaders have certainly done an incredible job, and I thank the Lord for them daily. They have such servant hearts, and love pouring into the students of Anchor Church.

Charlton has done an incredible job leading the worship team for student ministry. The team is currently comprised of three leaders and four students. I love watching God use the talents of these students and leaders to bring him praise, honor, and glory.

Even amidst a global pandemic, God has given us continued safety and health among our students and leaders. He has protected us. He has blessed our student ministry greatly, and in return, we just continually give him praise! We have learned to trust him more, and most importantly, no matter the circumstances, we know he is always good. We look forward to what God has in store for Anchor Students in 2021.



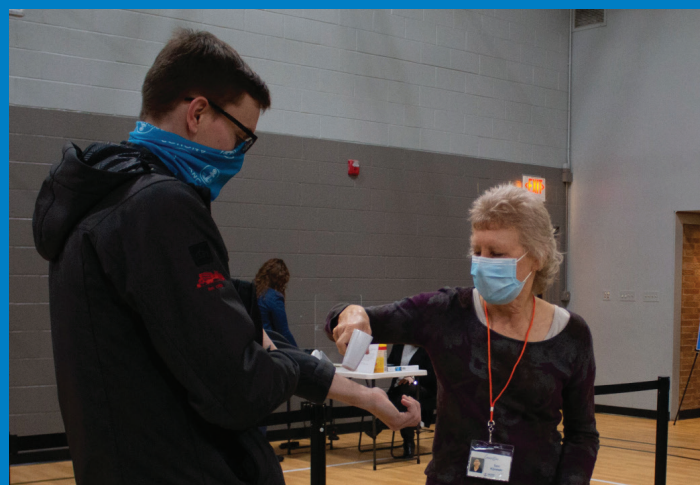




# WORK FOR *Christ*

## TRANSITION AND BENEVOLENCE

Prior to the pandemic, we were able to embrace one another and share meals at the church. The most famous being the Men's Chili Cook Off which consistently brings out the inner chef in all of the men of Anchor Church. In early March, the church bid farewell to Pastor Dave and Kresson Gurthusen. The end of March found us in the midst of a global pandemic and the return of Mike and Terry Kijowski who were serving the churches in Romania. Mike was invited to help fill in the vacancy left by Pastor Dave until his replacement could be hired.



In April, the pandemic forced us to become an online church. We strongly desired to connect with church members during this time, so a care team was created and led by the deacons. This team responded to various needs, from those needing a grocery delivery to some in financial distress. A care request button was added to our website that sent an email directly to the deacons about peoples' needs. The deacons assisted several families that found themselves in crisis and helped many more navigate the complexities of filing for unemployment benefits. The C3 Team that normally called and followed-up with first time visitors was called into action to reach out to our most vulnerable church members. They concentrated on contacting our church members who were in the at-risk category or not in a small group. Within the first 6 weeks of the pandemic, this team made over 200 phone calls and made contact with over 80 households within the church.



On July 12, Anchor Church relaunched after being closed down by the pandemic for four months. But for each ministry, it wasn't just a matter of going back to life as usual. We needed to wear masks and social distance. New ministry teams needed to be created, like the "COVID Buster" Clean Team and the Health Screening Team. We could no longer give people a pen and ask them to fill out the Connection Book. Therefore, a team was created to help people download an app so that we could track attendance. Greeters could no longer greet church members with a hand shake or a hug, but worked to help welcome people and move them through the new process



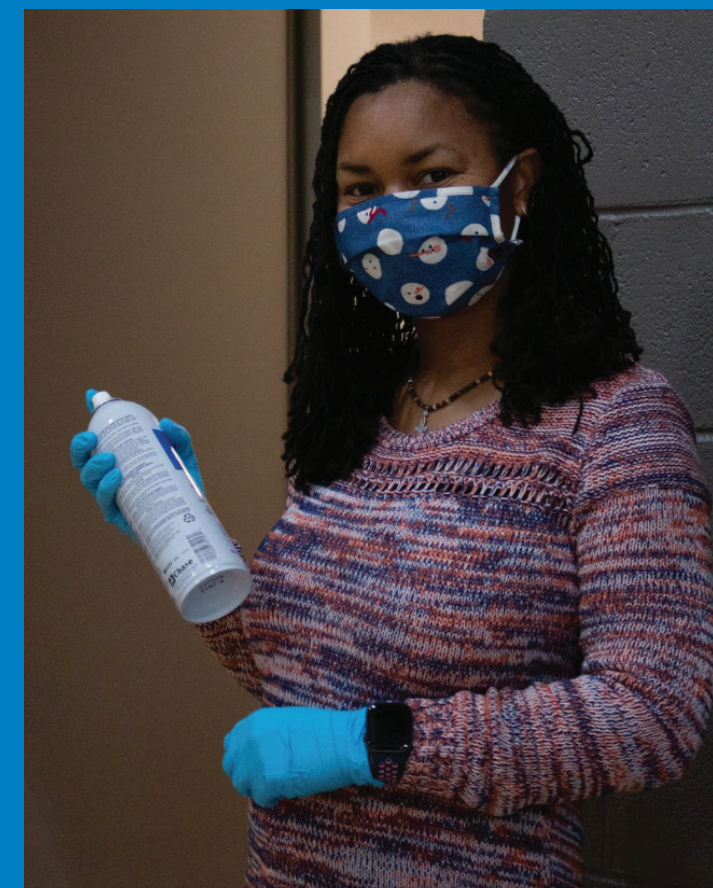
with ease. We all signed a new "Community Covenant" recognizing that while the new process was going to be inconvenient and awkward, we would continue to be patient and kind.

A spiritual care team was formed to care for the spiritual needs of those who found themselves in a health crisis, such as being in the hospital or homebound with illness and those who had become isolated due to the health risk. Because we could no longer offer pulpit prayer after services, we created an online prayer request button and provided prayer request cards once we were able to return to church. This helped us to identify those who desired personal prayer, and we have been able to pray with them over the phone. We also developed prayer partners to connect some of our members who became isolated due to health risk during the pandemic.

In the summer, we held a food drive to anticipate the needs of at-risk families. Because of COVID-19, we needed to find a way to do this without making close contact. We came up with two options for people to participate. The first was an online food drive where people could purchase an online bag of groceries for a family in need. The online food drive raised over \$2,000 for our electronic food pantry. We also held a drive-thru food drive. People were able to place food in the trunk of their car, drive up to the front doors of the church, pop open their trunk and volunteers would collect their food donation. Despite rain on the second day of our drive-thru food drive, we collected more than enough food to care for at-risk families during the pandemic.

In November, a group of deacons and volunteers delivered food to 10 families. They utilized the remaining

food from our summer food drive and purchased additional turkeys and food. Some families also received a grocery gift card. In all, over \$1,200 of benevolence was provided to those who greatly appreciated and benefited from this blessing.







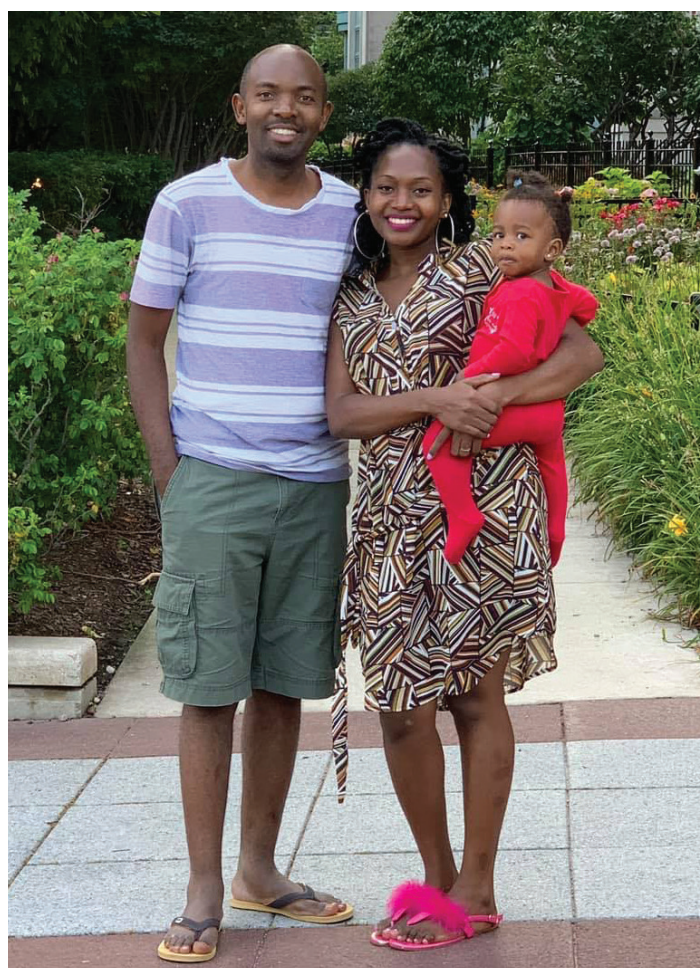
# Missions

MIKE & TERRY KIJOWSKI, PHILIP SAYUNI & PASTOR ALEX



## Mike & Terry Kijowski

Mike and Terry lived in Cluj, Romania and served the churches in Romania and Moldova. The first few months of 2020 were very busy serving at various churches leading sessions on Marriage, Parenting, and Children's Ministry. Mike was invited to preach and lead elder training. Terry was invited to speak at the Bucharest Church's Women's Conference. In March the global pandemic brought them back home to serve at Anchor Church.



## Philip Sayuni for the Church of Uganda

What we had only read about and dreaded, had reached Uganda - COVID -19! Uganda currently stands at 36,702 cases, 12,494 recoveries, and 294 deaths. COVID has had serious implications for the country and the church in particular: lockdowns, job losses, closure of churches, schools, and businesses. Yet with the many challenges brought about by COVID, if there is anything to learn, it is that the church of Christ triumphs even in the midst of tough circumstances. The closure of churches led to the revival of home fellowships. This redefined the concept of fellowship for Christians. Churches realized that it is not about numbers or the place "for where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them" (Matthew 18:20). This COVID season has roused the spirit of generosity in the church. Churches have encouraged their members to look out for one another especially during lockdown. It is an opportunity to pray for one another and to share with those in need, especially seeing how many people are impacted by COVID. COVID has provided an opportunity for change in the church. In such challenging times, the church continues to devise creative ways to reach many with the gospel through television, radio, and social media, seizing opportunities to advance Christ's kingdom. Many churches have had to adapt to the new normal and to make adjustments. The church has also seized the opportunity to give hope to a nation in despair. Jesus' church continues to triumph.



## Pastor Alex for Vertical Church Kyiv

In March 2020, Ukraine announced a complete lockdown with a ban on all events, including church gatherings and public transportation. Each church dealt with the disruption differently. Some moved their Sunday services online, but other decided to temporarily stop the gatherings. Churches with the strong connections among their members, supported by the small groups and active ministries, proved to be the most resilient. Despite lack of in-person Sunday services, churches managed to take care of their people - spiritually, mentally and physically. Even when the lockdown was partially lifted, the rules for churches, however, continued to change often. Despite the hard times, churches continued to serve their communities through social projects.

We were generously blessed by God during these times.



We switched to online services and had to quickly learn new skills. We wanted to make Easter a special celebration for all our members and Zoom helped us to share feelings and emotions. Even after we resumed gathering in person, our online ministry has remained, and we continue to serve people who cannot attend church. We have also started to reach people in other cities! Surprisingly, the lockdown helped take our worship ministry to the next level. They rehearsed multiple times a week in preparation for making recordings for the online services. When we returned to in person services, we were amazed at how they had grown in their skill.

Unfortunately, due to restrictions we had to cancel the summer kids' camp. We truly missed our brothers and sisters from the Anchor Church Palos who planned to come to Ukraine. We hope to see you in 2021 and serve the children together.

Small groups continued throughout 2020, either online or offline, and remained key to supporting our members on a day to day basis. When members became infected with the coronavirus, small groups were usually the first to learn about it. We fervently prayed, supported the ill and helped them financially. God blessed us with the opportunity to hold several Step 1 events, we have several new church members and even witnessed a baptism. We were able to end the year celebrating Christmas in person together as a community. We are celebrating the launch of two new ministries, including a ministry to teens and youth. We are thankful for your partnership and continued prayers.







# STRATEGIC PARTNERS



## Brandon Capuano for Harvest Bible Chapel in Rochester, NY

This year at Harvest Rochester was a great year despite the pandemic. After a brief shut down, they reopened in July. In addition to online services, they are hosting small groups of people in person at Comedy at the Carlson for in-person services. In July following reopening, Associate Pastor Dennis Opolentisima joined the Pastoral team. He will be running the Children's and Youth ministries. Dennis, his wife, Josi and daughter Eliana, moved to Rochester during the pandemic.

## NSP

The National School Project exists to train high school students to reach their schools with the gospel.

During the 2019-2020 school year:

- Schools coached: 113
- Witnessing Outings: 129
- Gospel Events: 144
- Event Attendance: 9,389
- Indicated decisions for Christ: 489

*\*Not including online outreach.*

## NATIONAL SCHOOL PROJECT



## Great Commision Collective

The GCC is a diverse collective of churches resourcing and supporting church planting around the world through gospel integrity, relational connection, intentional care, deliberate collaboration, contextual application, healthy plurality, and kingdom focus. The GCC and member churches value bold preaching, purposeful discipleship, fervent prayer, passionate worship and courageous evangelism. Currently, the GCC is made up of 128 churches in 21 countries. 6 of those are plants in progress.

In 2020, the GCC transitioned online launching a new website with 20 contributing writers and more than 70 published articles. They strengthened leaders through various cohorts, resources and training events.

- 100 Children's Ministry leaders were trained with 2 webinars
- Produced 2 Crucial Conversations videos about justice, race and the gospel
- Hosted 4 cohorts, training over 100 pastors and leaders
- Elder training video, The Soul of Plurality, with over 130 participants
- Established a \$50K COVID relief fund and assisted 26 pastors
- Created the Great Commission Fund for church planting and seeded it with \$100K
- Hosted 2 Senior Pastors and Wives retreats
- Introduced Season 1 of the Re:Launch podcast



# 2020 OPERATIONS

## EXPENSES

Budgeted Expenses	\$1,145,395
Staffing Expenses	\$547,124
Facilities & Office Expenses	\$381,972
Missions	\$64,652
Ministry Expenses	\$71,518

## TOTAL EXPENSES

**\$1,065,266**

## BENEVOLENCE OFFERINGS

### TOTAL BENEVOLENCE OFFERINGS

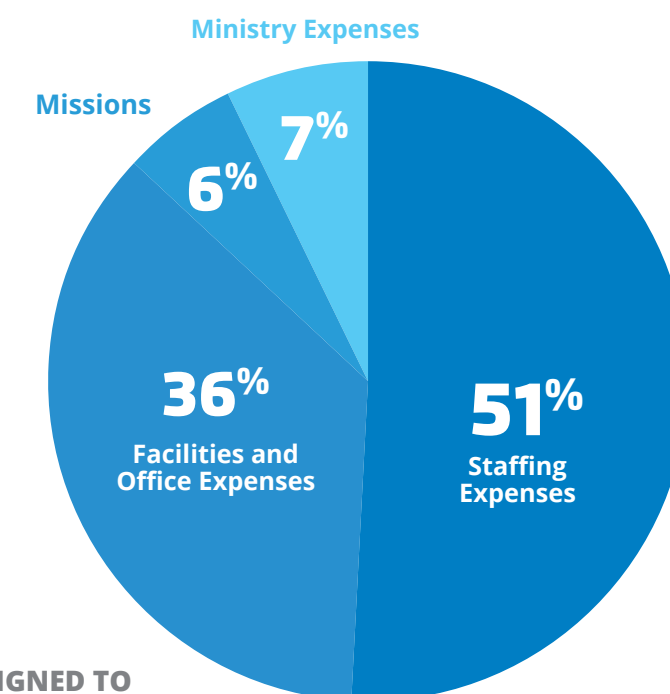
**\$10,625**

## INCOME

Tithes/Offerings	\$1,029,542
Payroll Protection Income	\$112,441
Wedding Income	\$200

## TOTAL INCOME

**\$1,142,183**



## UNSPENT COLLECTIONS

Staffing Expenses	\$5,514
Facilities & Office Expenses	\$9,000
Missions	\$49,888
Ministry Expenses	\$12,515

## TOTAL UNSPENT COLLECTIONS

**\$76,917**

## ASSIGNED TO

General Savings

General Savings

General Missions Savings

General Savings

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver

*2 Corinthians 9:7*





# 2020 BUILDING UPDATES

Pledges  
**\$709,297**

Total Collected  
**\$755,770**

Income from Savings 2018  
**\$50,770**

PROJECTS / SERVICES / FEES	2018 ESTIMATES	2020 ACTUAL
Architect Fees	\$65,000	\$67,516
Escrow	\$5,000	\$1,748
Site Work	\$35,800	\$29,800
Structural	\$263,990	\$302,982
Carpentry	\$152,142	\$163,905
Roofing	\$43,760	\$55,220
Doors and Frames	\$23,500	\$30,958
Flooring	\$61,640	\$82,756
Plumbing	\$103,038	\$124,074
HVAC	\$39,000	\$46,660
Security	\$10,460	REALLOCATED
Electrical	\$50,000	\$58,335
Gym Renovation	\$90,230	\$91,181
Parking Lot	\$90,000	\$87,930
Kids Area	\$5,000	REALLOCATED
Office	\$26,684	\$48,201
Management and Fees	\$178,237	\$194,817
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,243,481</b>	<b>\$1,386,083</b>

Line of Credit Balance (through 01/24/21) **\$575,855**

Roll into Mortgage **- \$500,000**

Collection Goal by June 1, 2021 **\$75,855**



# MEMES OF THE YEAR

cluedont  
@cluedont

Day 18 of lock down. Filled the dog with helium



SO, IN RETROSPECT,  
IN 2015, NOT A SINGLE  
PERSON GOT THE ANSWER  
RIGHT TO "WHERE DO YOU  
SEE YOURSELF 5 YEARS  
FROM NOW?"

My wife and I play this fun game during quarantine, it's called "Why Are You Doing It That Way?" and there are no winners

ME TAKING THE Mrs. TO GET  
PAMPERED ON THE FIRST  
DAY QUARANTINE IS OVER



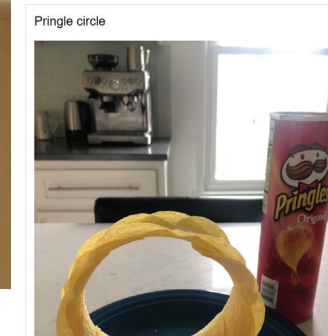
When the Coronavirus is gone and you can finally go back and finish the 8th grade



Governor says you can visit friends just stay in your car



7. This person who carefully stacked Pringles to perfection:



1. This person who got their cat ready for combat:

Quarantine had me bored so my stepdad and I made a cat tank that we saw somewhere on reddit



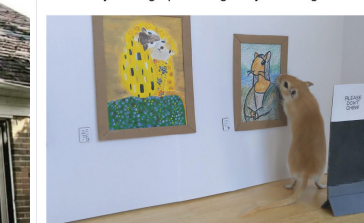
Peace Lutheran Church  
LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA • 668-1132

CAN WE UNINSTALL  
2020 & INSTALL  
IT AGAIN?  
THIS VERSION  
HAS A VIRUS.



4. This couple who made sure their gerbil stayed cultured during quarantine:

Quarantine, day 14. Me and my boyfriend spent the whole day setting up an art gallery for our gerbil.

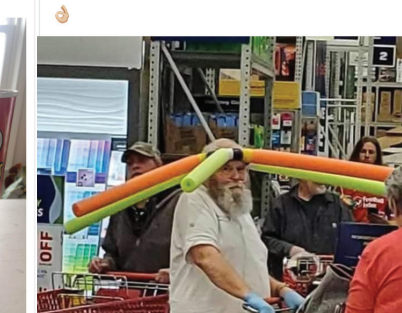


Pharaoh seeing us all freaking out over just one plague.



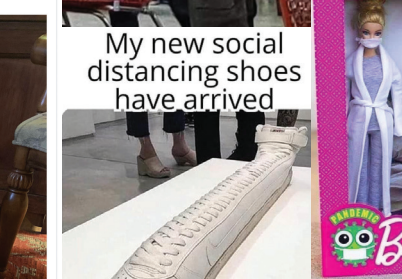
Lauren Nicole Usey  
Thursday at 4:19 PM ·

Social distancing champion of the week goes to...



1. This person who got their cat ready for combat:

Quarantine had me bored so my stepdad and I made a cat tank that we saw somewhere on reddit



Peace Lutheran Church  
LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA • 668-1132

CAN WE UNINSTALL  
2020 & INSTALL  
IT AGAIN?  
THIS VERSION  
HAS A VIRUS.



4. This couple who made sure their gerbil stayed cultured during quarantine:

Quarantine, day 14. Me and my boyfriend spent the whole day setting up an art gallery for our gerbil.



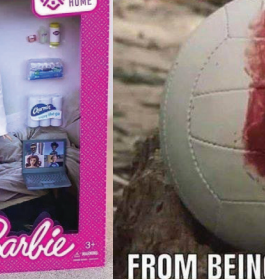
Lauren Nicole Usey  
Thursday at 4:19 PM ·

Social distancing champion of the week goes to...



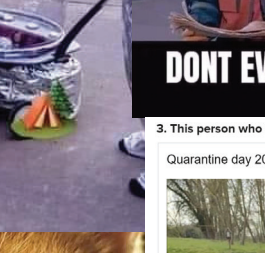
1. This person who got their cat ready for combat:

Quarantine had me bored so my stepdad and I made a cat tank that we saw somewhere on reddit



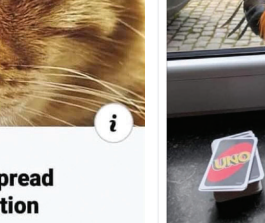
Peace Lutheran Church  
LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA • 668-1132

CAN WE UNINSTALL  
2020 & INSTALL  
IT AGAIN?  
THIS VERSION  
HAS A VIRUS.



4. This couple who made sure their gerbil stayed cultured during quarantine:

Quarantine, day 14. Me and my boyfriend spent the whole day setting up an art gallery for our gerbil.



Lauren Nicole Usey  
Thursday at 4:19 PM ·

Social distancing champion of the week goes to...



1. This person who got their cat ready for combat:

Quarantine had me bored so my stepdad and I made a cat tank that we saw somewhere on reddit



Peace Lutheran Church  
LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA • 668-1132

CAN WE UNINSTALL  
2020 & INSTALL  
IT AGAIN?  
THIS VERSION  
HAS A VIRUS.



4. This couple who made sure their gerbil stayed cultured during quarantine:

Quarantine, day 14. Me and my boyfriend spent the whole day setting up an art gallery for our gerbil.











**ANCHOR**  
**CHURCH**  
PALOS



**GREAT**  
**COMMISSION**  
**COLLECTIVE**

[WWW.ANCHORPALOS.ORG](http://WWW.ANCHORPALOS.ORG)