

This report was read at the Annual Business Meeting of Providence Baptist Church 6 December 2017.

The Lord has blessed our congregation in 2017. It has been one of those years that was so busy that until you stop to evaluate it, you don't realize just how much God has done and where he has been working. I am grateful for these annual reports as they allow us to reflect and contemplate what has transpired and give glory to God for what he has done in this place. So to that end, allow me to assess 2017 and provide you with some direction for the upcoming year.

Let me begin by sharing a few of our goals that we set for the previous year and the status on those particular issues. One area that needed attention was our children's ministries. To that end we recruited Ric and Giselle Crooks to be our children's Sunday School directors. Giselle has a background in education and over this past Spring she evaluated our needs. She discovered that we have excellent teachers in our Sunday School classes but what was missing were processes to make Sunday School run more efficiently and provide greater opportunities to help our classes grow and be appealing to visitors. In conjunction with this, she and Pamela Rigsby who serves as our worship Nursery co-ordinator met to revise our children's ministry policy. Just this past week we had our first parents meeting for the children's ministry with great success. We want to thank the parents for not only attending, but agreeing to participate in this process to help our Children grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. To assist in this, our children's ministry is adding the New City Catechism to our curriculum. This catechism provides 52 questions and answers that form a theological framework in which to view life. And moving into the 21st Century, it also offers an interactive app that will bless both parent and child alike. We invite you to check out all the features on the website at www.newcitycatechism.com But we are very excited about the new improved interaction between parents and teachers for the upcoming year.

We also had another children's triumph during the summer. Pam Giles and Kim Lott led another outstanding Vacation Bible School. We had exceptional teachers and teenagers that worked with drama, music, and games. Over 45 kids experienced the gospel through the Famous Scottish Super Sleuths. Brian did a fantastic job teaching the kids the lessons. The highlight of the week was this that small group of children were able to raise \$815 in their offering for the Rose of Sharon ministry to feed the homeless in Huntsville. (I might add here that you gave an additional \$500 in love offerings when Theresa came to speak about the ministry to the church at large this past summer). We are already gearing up for another great VBS next year.

Under Mike Watson's leadership we had another outstanding year in Adult Sunday School. The classes at Providence have been very well attended with higher participation than ever before. Teacher communication and meetings are going very well. We are trying to shake off the feel that you are attending college when using our numerical labels (101, 201 and so on). But it is necessary for there to be appropriate material for new Christians and those who are further along in their discipleship. Be on the lookout for a new way to designate the levels of advancement in our classes. We are also pleased to have added two new Teachers this year; Mike Hutchinson taught on Spiritual gifts and Glen Harper taught on Hymnology. We have heard nothing but praises for their teaching gifts. I would like to thank all of our Sunday School teachers, both men and women for their diligence and study for the year 2017. Thank you for building a strong foundation of faith here at Providence.

Another area that the elders wanted to work on was how to best minister to our senior adults as they transitioned in life as well as how to help adult children who are discovering a new role as care giver to their parents. We are pleased to announce that we have secured the services of Dr Howard Eryich, who is a well-known and well-respected Biblical counsellor to conduct a conference on these subjects. Dr Eyrich has written an outstanding book called *The Art of Aging* and the conference will be based upon this material. It will be held on April 14 and 15th. Let me just say, this conference is for all adults- not just senior adults. Everyone will be facing these types of issues at some point in life and will need Godly counsel to prepare them. Make sure you mark your calendars as we expect strong attendance from our sister churches at this conference.

The elders also have been working for some time on revising the articles of faith in our constitution and by-laws. Language changes over time and the church faces new challenges that she didn't face in previous years. So it is necessary to address some of these issues in our statement of faith. We presented these suggestions at our last quarterly update in September. But for various reasons, the meeting was poorly attended. We want the church to be fully educated on why these changes are being proposed. Therefore the elders decided to table these suggestions and allow the church to have time to digest the revisions when we return to the subject at a future quarterly update. It is our plan to present these amendments to be voted upon at the 2018 annual meeting next December.

However, we did succeed in introducing our new Hymnal to the church. *Hymns of Grace* was officially dedicated on June 14 of this year. Our friend Nathan Neely came to lead us at two different Hymn-Sing nights. He taught us some of the new songs found in the book. It was a special time as families were able to create an 'I was there' moment when they

placed the book plates in each song book. I would like to thank our music team of David Adams, Philip Rigsby and most especially our musicians, Amelia Kelly and Glen Harper. It has not been easy learning new hymns and arrangements. We want you to know how much we appreciate your effort. And they are not in vain. I have heard frequently from several of you how much these new songs have touched your souls. *Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor* and *He Will Hold Me Fast* seem to be particular favorites with the congregation.

From the pulpit, it was also a good year. Last Sunday we completed the Thessalonian Correspondence a series that spanned 37 weeks. Our Psalm of the year was Psalm 25. And at our summer prayer meetings, we presented the teaching on this in a new way. Each elder took a portion of the Psalm and shared how Psalm 25 spoke to their individual life and family. I was stirred as I heard testimony of how God's Word active and sustained each in their own situations. Also 2017 marked the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Once again, we were able to secure the services of Dr Michael Haykin from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Haykin blessed us by sharing about the reformation in England. Our congregation was introduced to heroes of the faith like William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer and Jane Grey. The conference was well attended as we had several visitors and local congregations join us.

And finally, we had an outstanding year in local ministries and global missions. This is where a church is to be measured. Are we being faithful with what we have to declare the sovereign majesty of God? Once again, members of our church were able to fully staff the CEF good news club at Legacy Elementary. That has opened a door for more ministry as the members of Providence have been contributing to their lunches of love program. We have discovered there are over 50 kids who have no access to food over the weekend that live here in the Monrovia community. We have helped supply these lunches for the children to have a meal in between school weeks. Because of our faithfulness to the needs of this school, the guidance counsellor has asked us to work with families in the community that are dealing with complex issues. If you would like more information about this program, please see our deacon of local ministry, Andrew Hanks or Ric Crooks who is working with the Good News club.

Speaking of CEF, Providence was privileged to be able to send out three summer missionaries through their Christian Youth in Action program. We heard two of them speak this past Sunday night at the missions banquet. In a single love-offering you were able to raise \$1430.00 to cover their expenses for the summer. This allowed these missionaries to focus on their training and work rather than on fundraising. These teens gave up the

weekdays of their summer to conduct Bible camps across the city. I can't express how proud I was as a pastor to hear their testimonies at the annual CEF banquet at the end of the summer and this past Sunday. Providence is pleased to support the Children's Evangelism Fellowship through its annual budget. This year you were able to give \$3,250 to this important ministry. I would encourage you to participate in their annual banquet. It will truly bless you to hear how the gospel is working in the city of Huntsville. To that end, you also continue to support the Rose of Sharon and Huntsville Crisis Pregnancy Center through the annual budget as well. And to top it off through our County Chaplains, Robin Kramer and Linda Barnett, you gave a large supply of goods that were made into goody bags to show appreciation for Madison County's Law Enforcement and First Responders. (Linda told me that our church made the most substantial donation).

Once again, our youth group worked hard to reach our city. Brian led a group of teens to participate in the Rocket City Mission of the Madison Baptist Association. They were able to replace the roofs on two homes and the siding on three others. But not only has work been done in our city, but our youth and adults supported our church planting efforts around the nation. Brian led a team in two waves to the city of Chicago to assist Craig and Elizabeth Priestly with work on their home which is where their house church meets and also to conduct evangelism through various projects in the city. Just recently, I was able to travel to Portland, Maine to preach at Christ Fellowship Church. I think it was an encouragement to Scott and Julie Terry to reconnect with one of their supporting churches. God is truly blessing this congregation. People are attracted to the preached Word of God and they are growing in their faith. It was a privilege for me to witness what God is doing there.

The members of Providence also made an impact for the gospel globally. You gave \$2,913.00 to Monika Carrol as she (once again) traipsed through the mountains of Ecuador on behalf of Church Planters International. Providence sent its first medical team to Southeast Asia this past February. It has created new ministry opportunities on the near horizon within these islands which we will announce at the first of the year. You continue to support missionaries in Mongolia and a family in the Czech Republic. This past Sunday night you learned about the Kemps ministry in South Africa along with our financial sponsorship of one of our college students to participate in the International Mission Board's Hands On Program in Southeast Asia. And we still continue to support missionary training, the International mission board and Wycliffe Bible Translators in our annual budget. Over all, in 2017 alone. Providence has given \$71,067.26 to local ministries and global missions.

2017 was a very strong year for our congregation. More people are being disciple, more money is being given to missions, more people are participating in prayer meetings and Sunday School. In the past eight months, five new families joined our congregation with another to be interviewed this coming Sunday. God is doing some amazing things for his glory at Providence Baptist Church.

But of course we do not plan to rest on our laurels so to speak. The elders, deacons and ministry teams are preparing for 2018. On the last Sunday of this year, we will launch our new sermon series on the book of Proverbs. I want to recommend two resources for you and your families to help ingrain this book of wisdom into our walk with Christ. One is Marty Machowski's newest book *Wise Up*. It contains twelve ten-minute devotions on Proverbs for your family. This would be great to do with your family worship on Sunday nights (and of course, alongside the New City Catechisms). Another resources is *Pass It On* by Champ Thorton. It is a journaling devotion for you to work through personally. Once it is completed, it becomes an heirloom for you to pass on to your children and grandchildren communicating to them how you applied God's Wisdom to your life. As a historian, I love this resource. It can pass the wisdom of God from one generation to another. With our theme of wisdom in the coming months, Psalm 1 will be our Psalm of the year. If we want wisdom, as James 1:5 says we must ask for it in prayer. And we want you to meditate and to employ this Psalm in your life to remind you we need Godly counsel in every area of our lives.

Administratively, the elders will continue to work on the Constitution and By Law Revisions. For those of you that attended the September quarterly update, we found your suggestions helpful. We will also be bringing forward language to formalize the deacon ministry within the By-Laws. It's time to begin preparation for a new building to replace the portables. The elders and financial ministry team are getting estimates for new Sunday School space. We are looking into what all of our options might be in terms of expenses from expanding classroom space to adding a fellowship hall and whether or not it can be done wisely in phases. Let me assure if you are hearing of this going on, don't panic. No decisions are being made. This is just information gathering so it can be presented to the church at a later date.

We also want to notify you of a leadership change on the council of elders. Dennon Clardy is needing to step down from the chairman of elders due to vocational considerations. Jim Carter will assume that post after the first of the year to complete Dennon's term.

In terms of ministry, Brian has been working on opportunities for the whole church to assist with Hurricane relief in Texas. There is a planned on February 16-19 to hang sheet rock

in homes. A larger and more ambitious trip with other churches and will occur in the summer months. Jim Carter is working on planning a marriage retreat for the upcoming year to strengthen our marriages. And on January 28th our church will be hosting Matthew Smith and Indelible Grace for a concert. If you are unfamiliar with this ministry, Indelible Grace has been revitalizing hymns for college ministries like Reformed University Fellowship by setting them to contemporary arrangements. Young people are rediscovering the joy of learning rich theology through these hymns. It will be our pleasure to host this concert and have New Life Baptist, Haven Baptist and Covenant Presbyterian participate in sponsorship.

But of primary importance to the elders is working on a new vision statement. Churches and their cultures change over time. Certain emphases that were important when the church began are not as important mainly because a firm foundation was laid for those issues. Now it is time to make sure we don't neglect other areas the church is called to serve. So over this past year, the elders worked through the entire New Testament to see 'what does God want his disciples to do when gathered together?' Then we have been evaluating the overall needs of the congregation both materially and spiritually and how we are doing in light of the New Testament teaching. This has required time, not only from our bi-weekly meetings, but also, two full Saturday meetings and an overnight retreat. Soon, we will be calling on various people within the church to help us in this evaluation to make sure we are communicating the right ideas and in the right manner. But we are convinced by God's leading, that this will make the vision of the church focused on doing the important things where we can truly glorify God.

So to that end, let me ask you to help us make 2018 as productive a year as 2017. Let me ask you first to pray for your elders. There are so many things capable of distracting our ministry to the church by just the sheer volume of work to be done. Pray that we will prioritize well with the sufficiency of Christ as our main focus. Second, pray for the congregation to be receptive to the Spirit's leading. Ask for the Spirit to lead you in your own obedience to him. Third, participate. When the call comes to be at a particular activity, come with an enthusiastic attitude. I know that the last thing you need in your life is more activity. And the last thing the elders want to do is add more meaningless activity to your schedule. But if we are listening to God and he is leading us to do something, then your time and your effort will be worth it. Not only will you bless others, but you also will receive a blessing as the Lord called you to participate in His glory.