

What's the buzz? Tell me what's happening!

In case you've missed the mentions in church over the last two months, here is a catch-up episode.

We are beginning a three-step process to deepen and strengthen our congregation. The first step is Jubilee Sunday to release us from the mire we've been stuck in. The second is the Dream part (not yet re-titled), and the third part is the new Synod three-year program. It is not a command or decree. The help that the Synod is giving is not just a one-time cash gift, but rather a commitment in covenant to walk with us as disciples and stewards.

We are excited to be one of the first congregations to put the Synod's new discipleship and stewardship education resource in practice. The first year has been used in a few other congregations, so we are not beginning something that is completely untested. Rather, we are being offered an opportunity to take this new resource and develop it to match Cross of Glory's needs. We are also helping to develop resources that may be helpful to other non-traditional ("contemporary") congregations throughout the Synod.

It is a three-year program titled "**First, We Give of Ourselves.**" The title comes from the apostle Paul's describing the generosity of the Macedonian Christians in 2 Corinthians 8:5: "...and this, not merely as we expected, they gave themselves first to the Lord..." The first year is "Giving in Grace," the second is "Giving in Gratitude," and the third is "Giving in Generosity." Each year includes a Bible Study for the whole congregation to be offered here and also posted on our website.

An important difference in this new program is that it helps congregations reframe the discussion of stewardship from one that understands stewardship simply as a fundraising activity to fund a budget to one that is centered in and through God's abundant grace in Christ. It helps congregations move from bill paying to gift sharing, from scarcity to abundance.

Unfortunately Cross of Glory is currently so encumbered by unmet obligations and physical responsibilities that we cannot wait. We need immediate help so that we can breathe during our learning and continue to grow in our faith and ministry. Therefore, along with some generous and immediate grant money, the Synod is providing us with the program that we've titled **Jubilee Sunday**. This is a short (8 week) program that finishes on **May 18**.

The most exciting part, in my opinion, comes in between. **Dream!** Once we are free from the limitations that are holding us back, we are free to Dream of what God's future holds for us! Romans 8:26-31 assures us that, even when we don't know what to ask for, God's Holy Spirit guides us, and draws us to the good things that God has waiting for us when we are working to His purpose. There will be whole congregational discussions and a survey to help plan what comes next. You will be encouraged to pray and imagine; you will be asked: what would you most like to see Cross of Glory become? What do you think this congregation will look like in five years? Ten years? What, specifically, will it take to make that be?

God has certainly blessed this unique community with many, many gifts! God has met our many needs in the past through various opportunities given. Now we are blessed with a means to be freed to dream big! And with tools to step forward into those dreams.