So, there’s been one word that has been coming up a lot lately for me. It’s been in my discussion with friends and family, with church leaders and congregants, even my doctor has brought it up! The word is vision. Okay, so yes, I need glasses for reading and distance, but that is not the type of vision I want to talk about. I want to talk vision as it regards our church. Where are we going as a church and why?

Let me say upfront, vision/vision-casting is not a category with which I’m super comfortable or experienced. I also tend to recoil from it and other like-sounding church-growth strategies due to my reformed theological convictions. However, what I’ve learned recently is that vision isn’t necessarily about innovation or novelty for that matter. Instead, as I have come to understand, vision is all about clarity of need and purpose. Let me explain a bit further using a past event.

A good number of us can remember back about seven years ago when our previous senior pastor left. I certainly do! Nan and I were neck-deep in baby-bottles caring for infant twins and......(continued on pg. 10)
We certainly have had a busy past several months in missions! Let’s get right to it.

In terms of updates, early in the year, Jan Buchanan retired from foreign missions after ten years in South Sudan and is living in her native Montreal, Quebec, praying for the Lord’s leading how to help the church there. Alex and Maggie Halbert have moved to Tegucigalpa, Honduras and are doing very well supporting the diaconal and administrative work of the church plant. Greg and Becca Bylsma (MTW Malaysia) had the hopes of raising support for by Fall 2023. But Praise the Lord, they reached their goal early and just arrived there in February! Rodney and Jana Davila, veteran missionaries who visited us back in 2022, are leaving this month for the Lord’s new work in El Salvador, where they will be MTW pioneers with the first reformed ministry in that country.

In other news, when local authorities required all jail ministries to provide services for all faiths, rather than compromising their convictions, Coastal Jail Ministries (CJM) opted to combine forces with Chatham Transitional Ministries (CTM). Matt Coleman, formerly CJM will work with the successful ministry of CTM and help former inmates live for Christ.

Moving on, over the past year, we also were blessed of the Lord to add a lot of new missionaries. First there is Ben and Melanie Kappers, who the Lord has called to plant a new PCA church in St. George, UT. Next, we added Chris and Savanna Kitchen who are teaming up with MTW Enterprise, a codename for ethnic immigrants living in London, England. Then, there’s Jonathan and Maggie Iverson (MTW Japan), where Jonathan will serve as the International Director of Asia/Pacific.

More locally, we decided to partner with intern Sara Schmidt for another year as she serves with Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) at SCAD. Along with Sarah, we added to our support list Martin Antoon, who heads up the RUF at SCAD and who also has preached at our church (think long hair).

Lastly, we were blessed to meet Larry and Mandy Wilkes (MTW), where they serve alongside Whaddon Road Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a revitalization work of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPC EW) in Cheltenham. We desire to partner with them, but we have committed all our financial resources at this time, and can only pray for more.

Until next time, keep praying! ❖
Spring in Savannah is so beautiful! Trees are blossoming, flowers are blooming, and the April sky is so blue. God’s creation is amazing! Let me just give you a reason to sit outside and enjoy our beautiful weather as you read an update about the ladies ministry at the Kirk.

Our Tuesday Morning Study just completed a study by Lydia Brownback on the book of Habakkuk. What a blessing it was to see Habakkuk’s attitude towards God and his circumstances completely change from utter destitution to a heart blossoming with submission and delight in just three short chapters. Habakkuk ends with one of the most beautiful verses in all of Scripture (Hab. 3:17-19): “Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines... Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.”

Our Ladies Evening Study, led by our delightful Wendy Nichols, just completed another Lydia Brownback on the book of Esther. We learned that God’s purposes are continually working out in the midst of perilous times, and even through His people as they come to learn like Esther, that God has given us positions of influence “for such a time as this.”

Looking ahead to the Fall, both of our ladies’ studies, Tuesday Morning and Evening, will endeavor to tackle the challenging book of Revelation. To aid us, we will rely upon Nancy Guthrie’s helpful and insightful study called “Blessed”. One of Nancy’s main points in the book is to show how, “Revelation is actually less about when Jesus will return and more about what we are to do, who we are to be, and what we can expect to endure as we wait for Jesus to return and establish His kingdom.” Please plan to join us for this study!

In the meantime, we have a great offering for the ladies about to begin. Some of our ladies love meeting so much that they would like to continue to meet on Tuesday mornings throughout the summer, seeking to devote the time to prayer and fellowship. If you would like to join them, pack a lunch and let Nan Whitney know!

Last but not least, the Women In The Kirk (WIK) needs you! Whereas we have all of what we call our “B” service leadership positions filled, we need volunteers to support them. Thus far we have on leadership: Lauren Sather overseeing Brides; April Little caring for Babies; Ann Shoup heading up Bereavement; and Linda Breen over Be Well. Each of these will invite 3-4 of you to join her. If you have a particular area of interest and would like to help, please contact the head of the team.

Also, we need volunteers for the following WIK events: Love Baskets (in February), The Mother’s Day Tea, and The Wik Christmas Luncheon. If you are asked to join a team or head an event, please consider saying “yes”. Remember “many hands make light work.” (continued on pg. 7)
I love singing, although admittedly I am not very good at it. I have been blessed with a small choir in my wife and daughters who all have lovely voices. When we first visited the Kirk, we were impressed with the congregational singing. It might surprise you to learn that singing in some churches has gone back to pre-Reformation times, meaning it is largely the responsibility of a worship team who are in front of the congregation to do the singing. We are a singing congregation, and I pray we never stop. Not only are we a singing congregation, but we are a hymnal congregation. In the pews are well worn Bibles next to well worn hymnals and psalters. I pray they never stop being well worn and well loved. As well loved as our hymnals are have you ever wondered about the hymns in them? Who wrote them? Why? What is the theology behind them? I thought it might be spiritually beneficial to ask these questions of a popular hymn most of us would be familiar with: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.

**Robert Robinson - Minister & Hymn writer**

The author of this beloved hymn was an Englishman, Robert Robinson (1735-1790). At the age of 8, his father died and his widowed mother was left destitute. While materially poor, she was a spiritually rich and pious woman. Her prayer was that her son, Robert, would become a Church of England minister. At the age of 15, he was indentured to a barber in London. During this time he was bookish but also rebellious. He became known for being a drunk and “frolicker.” God had other plans for the wayward barber. Robert found himself captivated by the preaching of George Whitefield. He heard Whitefield deliver a sermon on Matthew 3:7 about those who would flee “the wrath to come.” The sermon, and that particular phrase, haunted young Robert. Six years after hearing Whitefield preach, Robert wrote him informing the great preacher that through his sermon Robert had found “peace by believing.”

Robinson would remain in London attending regularly the ministry of John Gill, John Wesley, and other evangelical ministers. He was a life long nonconformist and ministered among the Calvinistic Methodists, Congregationalists, and eventually the Baptists. He ministered the longest among the Particular Baptists at Cambridge. His ministry at Cambridge began with 34 people in extremely poor facilities in a town that hated Nonconformists (those outside the Church of England). Robinson was faithful to
his call and a church building was built shortly after his arrival. Fifteen years later, the church had grown to two hundred families with six hundred attending morning worship and a staggering eight hundred attending evening worship! He would also reach thousands as a result of his itinerant preaching schedule. He died suddenly in 1790.

**Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing**

Robinson wrote *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* in 1758 at the age of 22. As we look at this hymn, there are certain themes that echo Scripture and mirror the testimony of its author.

The hymn is grace centered, “Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.” In this opening stanza, I hear Paul in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” We are debtors to grace (Romans 8:12) without which we could not enjoy communion with God and hope of eternal life. This grace frees us from our slavery to sin.

There is also a theme of God’s pursuit of us. “Jesus sought me when a stranger, wand’ring from the fold of God.” Here we may think of Paul’s powerful words in Ephesians 2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Or maybe you think of Jesus’ referring to himself as the good Shepherd who leaves the 99 to go after that 1 lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-13). Both are probably right and good to meditate on as we sing. We see this theme again in possibly the most famous line of the hymn, “Prone to wander – Lord, I feel it – prone to leave the God I love.” We who were far from God have been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ, yet, there remains sin and temptation that might cause us to leave the God we love. So how do we combat the desire to leave God? We sing, “Let that grace, now like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.” Paul says that we have been sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit ready for the day of redemption (Eph 1:13; 4:30). The only person who can keep our hearts from wandering is Christ. This line is a prayer admitting our inability to persevere apart from the grace of God.

**Conclusion**

I love this hymn. We need to be reminded that we are saved by grace and kept faithful by grace to which we are great debtors. What happens to us when we sing a hymn like *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*? We confess as one body our utter dependence on the grace of God in salvation. We confess that we are prone to wander and would wander if our hearts were not bound to God. The power of singing this hymn is there will be Sundays when you are able to boldly sing “Oh to grace how great a debtor!” There will also be Sundays where you cry out for help admitting, “Prone to wander - Lord, I feel it!” It is a hymn that covers you in seasons of doubt and seasons of assurance. I think that is why it is so famous and worthy of regular singing.
Meet New Members

The Jeffersons
Sam, Megyn, Mabel, & Hazel

What is your favorite food?
› Tacos (All)

What was your first/fav. concert?
› Boyz II Men (M) & Dave Matthews (S)

What is your favorite Scripture?
› Eze. 37 (M) & Eph. 6:12 (S)

The Phillips
John, Kate, Galilee, Glory, Gideon, Grace, Gabriel, Gentle, & Garnet

What is your favorite food?
› Flaky Ritz Crackers (M) & Filet Mignon (B)

What was your first/fav. concert?
› Winter Jam (M) & Jars of Clay (B)

What is your favorite Scripture?
› Rev. 21:4 (M) & Rom. 8:28 (B)

What is your favorite food?
› Food is a family hobby, we love it! Esp. spicy & soups.

What was your first/fav. concert?
› Our favorite: Andrew Peterson’s Behold the Lamb of God!

What is your favorite Scripture?
› Our family verse is Ps. 126:2-3
I can’t end without reminding you about our May 12-13 trip to Bluffton, SC. Eighteen of our Kirk ladies have signed up to attend a workshop taught by Nancy Guthrie on Biblical Theology. This will be a wonderful event and please do pray for our time and learning!

As you can see our Women’s Ministries are vibrant and busy. We remain grateful to our Session and Diaconate who support us so well. What a privilege to be at The Kirk!
If you could do one thing to make the biggest impact in our church community for generations to come, what would it be? Win the lottery and give all the proceeds to the church? Sure that would be amazing. It would definitely make an impact, but it is a long shot to say the least. What’s a better opportunity to sink your time, talents, and treasures into? What is one thing that will change the lives of generations in our church and would also have a broader impact into the whole world?

While you’re thinking I’ll tell you a story. I was sitting with Griffin Weikert the other day talking sports. I asked him, “What’s one thing you could do to make your football team better 5 years from now?” Think about that question. It’s a bit odd, right? Even the youngest freshman won’t be on the team in 5 years (barring a red-shirt). Why think about making the team better when you’re not even there? Better yet, how can someone impact a team when they are not around?

The things we do, here and now, can impact generations and Griffin can change his team five years from now when he is not even on the team... but how? By picking two guys that are younger and showing them what he has learned about being on a team, how to play the game, how to submit to his coach. That mutual encouragement, respect, and overall camaraderie would be infectious. If those two guys did the same the next year, then that is four people he has affected. Then those four would create eight. In five years, one person has affected 32 lives! I’m not a betting man, but I’d be willing to put my life on the line for that one thing. It would be the one opportunity that would make the biggest impact in the lives of generations to come.

So what’s your answer? What would you do to create the biggest long term impact for the church for generations to come? I have a suggestion. Pick two people. Show them who Christ is, show them how to follow Christ, and show them how to show others to follow Christ. This is discipleship.

I’m thrilled that we hired Philip Ryan as our Assistant Pastor of discipleship to help us do this very thing—disciple. I mean stoked! I have been inspired by watching Pete meet with many men every week, Kate with many women every week, our small groups being a place to help aid in discipling. Through it all it is encouraging to see what Philip is doing to help us in this effort. I personally am meeting with Griffin and Christian every week and am hopeful one day they will meet with others to do the same.

Want to disciple or be discipled? Go talk to Philip & GET EQUIPPED!
The New Look
BY PETE WHITNEY

So over the past several of weeks you may have received a new strange-looking email from the church which you likely have ignored or perhaps may have thought was some phishing scam. Well, if it was indeed from “@kirkpca.org” at the end of the email (always verify the domain, not just the name shown), it wasn’t a phishing scam but was actually from us.

We recently have made a big behind-the-scenes administrative switch to a new all-in-one online platform called Subsplash. Yeah, it’s a trendy name, but that is not what drew us to the platform. Instead, after much investigation, we found that another system would be able to combine what we had in our various platforms (Squarespace, OneChurch, Google, Vimeo, and more), and put it all in one place.

That’s a lot to promise, but we have found after trying it out over the past couple of weeks that it can deliver! This new Subsplash system offers live-streaming, emailing, contributions, grouping, giving, messaging (a new feature), website & app design, as well as administrative work all in one spot. Perhaps best of all, it costs about the same price as all the other systems.

Now there are some drawbacks (like our church directory will be going away…sad), but this new system also comes with an app that is far more functional and helpful than before. For the most part, people used the OneChurch app for the church directory. But this new app, which will have our own branding (The Kirk), will do so much more. Like most apps it will have listings of events, groups, sermons, and articles. But even more, this app will have a serving portal for sign ups, group messaging for teams, direct messaging for chats, updates on missionaries, church news, prayer requests, a link for our weekly bulletin, and even a Bible, complete with reading plans and linked sermons. Yeah, it has a lot.

So, we tell you this really as an introduction to the change. Yes, we are going to say goodbye to OneChurch (go ahead and get one last look at the directory and then delete the app!). But be on the lookout for an announcement concerning our new app when it is approved by Google and Apple. In the meantime, feel free to follow the links that officially come from us (’@kirkpca.org’) and know that you are safe! Let us know if you have any questions! ❖
Pastor’s Letter
(CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)

out of nowhere we heard the news that Nan’s mom had died of a heart attack! It was traumatic to say the least. Well, in the midst of all that, our church needed to figure out where it was heading and fast, because the pastor was stepping away.

A lot was running through my mind at the time, but one very clear thought I had was, “I cannot handle all of this!” Initially, I responded in fear, wanting to run away from it all. But then through prayer and several divinely appointed conversations, one with my dad and another with a great brother, Jeff Rayno, I realized that my greatest problem actually presented me and our church with our greatest solution! I certainly couldn’t handle all of it, but God wasn’t calling me to handle it all. God was calling the church and me to come together to take on the burden!

What that meant is that we needed more and new spiritual leaders of the church (i.e. elders). So, we prayed and the Lord raised up wonderful men. We also needed a property, so we prayed, and the Lord sent the funds. Our deacons bought the property and renovated our current facility (and they did a tremendous job!). Further, we needed ministry assistants and staff, and the Lord has blessed us beyond measure in sending who He has when we needed them! All of this and more, the Lord did, and through us together! I couldn’t handle it, nor should I. The church didn’t need me, it needed WE.

But that ‘WE’ thought is what? It’s vision. Not novelty but clarity from the Lord as to what we need to do.

So I tell you that to say, we are at a similar place where we need vision again. Not that we are coming apart (or that Nan and I are having twins again, ha!), but rather that we are at a place of great blessing even if we are not exactly sure where we are going. Our vision of “WE” or “equipping the saints” from the past was very helpful, but it’s time for us to seek the Lord for more direction and clarity as to what and how we may focus our prayers and attention. I know from this past Sunday’s sermon, we, at least, need greater connecting and sharing among ourselves. But I believe we need more than that.

So this time, I’m asking that we do this together, that we pray and wait upon the Lord for leading and vision, and that together He might show us the way. Would you join together me in this? ❖
Yes, it’s actually coming—May 8th! Instead of waiting any further, we are going to use the money we have saved to pay a contractor to build this. But instead of being a pirate ship, it’ll be an ark (think Noah). This is so exciting!