

# **2024 Week of Prayer and Practice**

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## Introduction

This week you are invited to explore routines and rhythms of steadily walking in the presence of Jesus. Living in the fullness of the kingdom of God is a journey of endurance. As our lives are exposed to the elements of this world, God has promised that he will never leave or abandon us (Deuteronomy 31:6). This promise continues through Jesus saying, *“Remember, I am with you always to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). Jesus invites all who are weary to come to him and they will find rest (Matthew 11:28).

Will you accept his invitation?

Jesus shaped the **practices of his life** to embrace complete communion with his Heavenly Father. Once again, Jesus has invited his followers to shape their lives around these same practices. We can experience complete communion with God through the power of the Holy Spirit when we **practice the way of Jesus**.

In this guide each day provides a template which will highlight a specific practice. The intention is that this will begin to reveal to you the beauty and mystery of each specific practice. Depending on your experience, this week is a continuation or an introduction to a life of faithful pursuit. Will you faithfully pursue Jesus? Will you practice his ways? Will you actively resist the forces determined to leave you frustrated and increasingly more fatigued? Don't be fooled — the flesh, the world, and the devil want nothing more than for you to fill your time with things that promise satisfaction. Each creates a mirage of fullness. Each will leave you in a pile of shame, regret, and loneliness.

**But God** in his steadfast love welcomes us with a strong and warm embrace:

*“Now we look inside, and what we see is that **anyone united with the Messiah** gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; **a new life emerges!** Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, **giving the world a fresh start** by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. **We're Christ's representatives.** God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and **enter into God's work** of making things right between them (1 Corinthians 5:17-20, The Message).*

We are invited to participate in the renewal of all things. We have been

transformed into **grace people, good news people** and **faith people**. These practices, if developed over a life-time, will increase our joy in the presence of the Father. These practices will help us sustain abundant living.

As you head into this Week of Prayer and Practice, may God meet you each day with fresh communion and revelation as you pray through and engage in each practice. By the power of his Spirit, may we be formed into a church who exhibits **transforming grace, good news, and active faith**.

**Cover Design:** This year Second Mile is using the Week of Prayer to focus on practices that, we pray, will begin to form and strengthen each of us together as one body. The cover image for this year's prayer guide is reflective of our desire to practice the way of Jesus, having our core DNA changed and formed as we walk the narrow path of Kingdom living, and establishing ourselves stronger and more deeply in the place Jesus has at this moment. The seven horizontal stripes on the cover, one for each day of the week, are each a single row of pixels from a photo of this city we call home stretched vertically. These are pictures of wildflowers in my front yard, an alley on the campus of the university, the tailfins of planes lined up at the airport, and many other places around the area. The content of the source images isn't important, but when those single rows of pixels are stretched vertically they begin to take on the appearance of DNA sequences. Just like these places make up the core identity of the city, may God use the practices we learn on these seven days to begin to build us up as followers of Christ, travelers on the narrow path of the Kingdom, and residents of this beautiful city that are formed by the practices on the following pages. – John Weatherford

## **MONDAY - Praise and Thanksgiving**

*Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

As we follow Jesus we increasingly share in his deep joy in and fellowship with the Father. Today, we acknowledge our indebtedness to others and recognize that there is much to give thanks for.

### **TRANSFORMING GRACE**

*"[Giving Thanks is] acknowledging the presence of goodness and beauty in our lives that did not come through our own work." Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered, Wilhoit.*

If we want to become people of peace, full of joy, then we must cultivate habits of giving thanks (Colossians 3:15-17). Allow God's goodness to fill your thoughts.

- Begin giving thanks by reflecting on how you have arrived to today.
- How has God shown his faithful love to you?
- How has he persistently, patiently pursued you?
- When you consider how God has led you thus far, what comes to mind to thank him for?

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his faithful love endures forever. Psalm 118:1*

### **GOOD NEWS**

It's easy to get overwhelmed by our circumstances and lose sight of God's provision, his presence, and his active care. We often don't understand his ways. Struggling to trust God and his goodness is an ancient challenge. People in a wilderness recently rescued out of slavery were quick to forget their redemption and complain about the journey. They neglected the reality that they were being led and provided for in every step. God helps us to consider what he has done for us and what he is doing in our lives. He is with us.

*My soul, bless the Lord, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. My soul, bless the Lord, and do not forget all his benefits. Psalm 103:1-2*

- Consider the good news and all the good gifts given to you in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Read a passage like Ephesians 1:3-14, if you need help recalling.
- Ask God for eyes to see all his many benefits and blessings.
- Thank God for his patience towards us when we grumble.
- What gifts have you received today?

## ACTIVE FAITH

*I will thank the Lord with all my heart; I will declare all your wondrous works. Psalm 9:1*

Today commit to giving thanks as a deliberate act of faith, not just during a single, one-off meal, but with lives that are charged with an atmosphere of gratitude, a readiness to give thanks always for everything (Ephesians 5:20). Resolve: “I *will* thank the Lord with all my heart.” Experiment with one of the following practices:

- Take a walk, thanking God for every detail that you see, all the details that are “declaring the glory of God.” (Psalm 19:1)

As you see something that prompts you to reflect on God’s goodness say “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His faithful love endures forever.” (e.g. Psalm 136) Allow that phrasing to become the liturgy of your life’s walk.

- Join with other believers who have read Psalm 23 and been moved to gratitude. Allow this passage to lead you into giving thanks for an unshakeable kingdom (Hebrews 12:26-29). Read it out loud.

*The Lord is my shepherd;  
I have what I need.  
He lets me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside quiet waters.  
He renews my life;  
he leads me along the right paths  
for his name’s sake.  
Even when I go through the darkest valley,  
I fear no danger,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;*

*you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
as long as I live.*

- Be thankful for people in your life.

Write a note. Encourage one another and give thanks for one another. Consider how Paul thanks God in letters to thank people. How have you seen the Spirit active in your brothers and sisters? How have you seen the Father's love through your brothers and sisters? How have you been encouraged to follow Jesus by your brothers and sisters?

*I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:3-6*

- Listen (and sing!) songs of thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:16).

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him all creatures here below;  
Praise him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

- Draw or paint a picture of blessings in your life.

*Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him! Psalm 34:8*

God, help us to be present and attentive in every moment, to savor his goodness wherever it is found, and to give thanks when we see it.

## Tuesday - Confession

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9*

Practicing confession means “saying the same thing,” drawing near to God and agreeing with him about the state of our hearts and our world.

## TRANSFORMING GRACE

Confession is a gift that enables us to experience and share freedom from guilt, shame, and condemnation and become, increasingly, grace people.

Often we swing between two extremes:

- We ignore the wrong in this world, making light of God’s justice.
- We wallow in our own wrongdoing, making light of God’s mercy.

Confession holds this experience in tension and enables the flow of grace—the enjoyment of continual forgiveness and cleansing.

Allow God’s care for you to lead you to confession by acknowledging your need for help, your need for transforming grace.

- Begin confession by agreeing with a fellow confessor’s prayer. Speak these words slowly, out loud:

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way. Psalm 139:23-24*

## GOOD NEWS

As we ready ourselves to confess, we remember that Jesus has done everything necessary to cleanse us from all that is not right.

Confession has a baggage-filled history. Many of us are wary of confession that implies God is angry with us, recording our faults and withholding forgiveness until we can perfectly recall our sins with adequate detail and appropriate contrition. We hesitate to participate in a practice that seems burdensome, serving only to deepen the failure and condemnation we already struggle with.

But God describes confession as cleansing and washing and healing, restoration and renewal from daily filth, a continually available gift (1 John 1:9; Titus 3:5; James 5:16). Confession is about unburdening ourselves by casting our cares upon one who cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). It is a long soak after a hard-fought day. It is having our feet washed, sitting in honesty with our maker and acknowledging how needy and dependent we his children are. How deeply we want to live in harmony with our Father! How deep is his faithful love to us to make harmony possible!

In confession, we begin to uncover how much we need washing but we coincidentally discover how faithful God is to forgive all and cleanse all, totally and completely (Luke 7:41-48, 1 John 1:9). That's good news!

- Take a bath or shower today and ask God to help you see confession as an enjoyable and beneficial gift.
- If necessary, make your first confession one of agreement about confession: "I have viewed the gift of confession as burdensome. Help me to see it as the good gift that it is, enabling me to enjoy faithful forgiveness. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!"

## ACTIVE FAITH

*"When we begin to practice Jesus' commands, we should immediately see that we are in over our heads." James Wilhoit*

- Allow the following prompts to lead you into a time of confession:
  - What are common temptations or struggles that come to mind when you consider imitating Jesus?
  - What unresolved questions do you have about God or your faith that keep you from engaging your spiritual life wholeheartedly?
  - Are there relational decisions, regrets, and guilt that consistently prevent you from moving forward?
  - Are you allowing the Spirit to disrupt sinful patterns in your life?
  - Are there particular promises or claims that God has made that you struggle to believe or agree with?
  - Has the amount of triviality flooding your inbox/feed/life moved you to care less about significant things?
  - Are you "distracted by many tasks" and "neglecting the one necessary thing?" (Luke 10)
  - Are you so focused and "busy" that you neglect to love your neighbor? (Luke 10)



- Join with other believers by praying the following as you seek to be honest with God. Let your need drive you to pray:

*Most merciful God,  
We confess that we have sinned against you  
In thought, word, and deed,  
By what we have done,  
And by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
Have mercy on us and forgive us;  
That we may delight in your will,  
And walk in your ways,  
To the glory of your Name. Amen.*  
Book of Common Prayer

- Listen to “His Mercy is More” and “Lord have Mercy” by Keith and Kristyn Getty.
- Conclude your time of confession with an assurance of pardon:

Walk in the light. Walk with the assurance of no condemnation. Allow the Spirit to comfort you in the very place where sin would make you doubt, be anxious, or be unresponsive. Grace abounds more where sin abounds (Romans 5:20-21) so be aware that grace is abounding as you confess. Allow that forgiveness to draw you close to Jesus and his cross. Make confession a daily part of your life for his mercies are new every morning! (Lamentations 3:22-23)

- Thank God that he is greater than your heart when your own heart seems to condemn you.

*This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things. 1 John 3:19-20*

## Wednesday: Solitude and Simplicity

### Solitude

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying. Mark 1:35*

“That is the only reason why I desire solitude - to be lost to all created things, to die to them and to the knowledge of them, for they remind me of my distance from You.” Thomas Merton

*Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him, and he will act,  
making your righteousness shine like the dawn,  
your justice like the noonday.*

***Be silent before the Lord and wait expectantly for him;***

*do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way,  
by the person who carries out evil plans.*

*Refrain from anger and give up your rage;  
do not be agitated—it can only bring harm.*

*For evildoers will be destroyed,  
but those who put their hope in the Lord  
will inherit the land. Psalm 37:5-9*

*Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart be courageous.  
Wait for the Lord. Psalm 27:14*

Solitude is a courageous endeavor. It leaves you alone with yourself and bare before an all knowing God. It provides an opportunity to reflect upon the rawness of the human soul. To spend time in solitude means you must, for a moment, set all other relationships aside. This is no small or easy task. We gain much self-worth from others depending on us for companionship and advice. Others find a tremendous amount of comfort in our immediate availability at the whim of human emotion and necessity.

### TRANSFORMING GRACE

Understanding God's grace is multi-faceted. One aspect of God's grace that transforms his children is that we are drawn into his presence. This is something to be treasured. Solitude creates space to be drawn into the presence of God.

We, too, need the experiential knowledge of hearing God not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in his gentle whisper (1 Kings 9:11-12).

We are invited into God's grace (favor) through solitude. It is fundamental to a life of spiritual formation. It is a mysterious necessity for the preparation of engaging in any other spiritual practice. It teaches us to sharpen our focus and to set our minds and hearts before Jesus. We practice solitude so that we can abide in Jesus with greater intensity and for longer periods of time.

*"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful. John 14:27*

*During those days he went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12*

Jesus has promised that we will experience grace through the peace that he has given.

Develop the practice of solitude:

- Starting today, set aside time to be alone, silent, and still before God. This is going to require practice, intentionality, and perseverance. Continue to create space for solitude through the rest of this week. Start small and grow into it. Start with ten minutes and trust God to build your enjoyment of this practice. You will be surprised at the growth of your desire to extend your time.
- As you spend time in solitude you are going to start to notice all kinds of feelings. They will be all over the place. You might feel distracted, tired, agitated, relieved, excited, empty, curious, etc. Lean in to this process and begin to notice and name your feelings and emotions, giving them to God. Using a journal can be very helpful for you to record your insights and journey in this process. Pray through each emotion asking the Holy Spirit to give you a kingdom perspective.
- Remember there are three forces that will do whatever it takes to prevent you from seeking and resting in the presence of God. The flesh, the world, and the devil will relentlessly try to rob you of the peace given by the Holy Spirit. Begin to process the accusations and lies that come from these enemies. Remember the truth of scripture that reminds you of God's goodness and purposes in your life. Use specific passages of scripture as your guide for prayer. Allow them to bolster your reliance on Jesus.
- Spend time in prayer. You have prepared your spirit to hear from God. Lean into communion with your Heavenly Father. Begin to feel the embrace of the goodness of Jesus in your life. The more time

dedicated to solitude the more familiar God's voice and presence will become. This increased familiarity with God will enhance your time of prayer. You will long for and cherish your time with God like you do in conversing with a close and familiar friend.

## **Simplicity**

- Genuinely placing the kingdom of God first
- Intentionally practicing the denial of self

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:33-34*

Embracing the words of Jesus allows us to not get distracted with the chaos of our world. We are given the freedom to live with more love, joy, and meaning in Christ.

## **THIS IS GOOD NEWS!**

What is at the heart of practicing simplicity? – Gratitude, contentment, the fruit of a Jesus-filled life, not bloated with the things of this world.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Matthew 6:5*

Jesus said he came so that those who know him will have life and have it in abundance — a fullness of life (John 10:10). A life of abundance is not a life overflowing with things.

- Ask God to give you insight into his abundance in your life. What brings you joy, delight, and gratefulness? Take time thanking God for these things.

Humans love to fill their lives with all kinds of things. Busyness, technology, and various distractions have exponentially increased the clutter of our everyday experiences.

- Ask yourself a simple question, "What is it that is getting in the way of making the kingdom of God my first priority?"
- Is it the time you spend consuming TV, social media, gaming, etc.?
- Is it your approach or attitude concerning your work / career?

- Are you so worried about the security of your future that you are missing life in the present?
- Are you more comforted by food than you are by the Holy Spirit?
- Are your habits overly concerned with what you will eat, what you will wear, or how long you will spend working out? (Matthew 6:26-28)

Notice the above questions are an attempt to help you identify anything in you that is producing addictive behavior. What are the things in your life that are controlling you?

- Take some time through prayer and write down what behavior you will address and how you will embrace simplicity in that area.

### Examples:

- I will not fill times of waiting during the day with mindless scrolling on my phone.
  - I will limit my consumption of technology and instead go on a walk and spend time in prayer.
  - I will begin to identify what occupies my thoughts (Psalm 131). I will begin the process of releasing those things and find my hope in God.
  - I will carve out time to sit at the table and enjoy a meal with friends and family, savoring the process of preparing a meal and nurturing relationships.
- Surrender these to Jesus in prayer. Ask for his help.

Now ask someone to hold you accountable. The process of letting go and changing habits is hard. You will need someone to encourage and pray for you. You will need others around you that can encourage you to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus with every fiber of your being (Luke 9:23).

## **ACTIVE FAITH**

The practice of solitude and simplicity can't be achieved in one day. Each new day they will require a step of faith.

- How do my actions each day demonstrate a greater dependence on Jesus and the activity of the Holy Spirit?
- Has abiding in Jesus become easier because time spent with him has become greater?
- Because you have spent quality time in the presence of God each day, are you more equipped to face the challenges, relationships, and difficulties that are sure to come?

- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you names of people that he is inviting you to spend more time with. How will you need to adjust your schedule to follow through on who he has brought to mind?
- Ask Jesus to give you the insight and energy to be an encouragement to someone in these two areas (solitude and simplicity). Can you offer childcare so a parent can get some extended alone time? Can you host “technology free” evenings focused on vibrant conversation and meaningful spiritual encouragement?
- Ask God to enable you to experience full abundance in his presence as you seek solitude and simplicity in your life.
- Trust God to bring peace into your life through these practices.

*Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7*

## Thursday - Serving

*The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:7-11*

The practice of serving involves willfully laying down your time, talent, and treasure to honor God and benefit others.

- Ask God to help you pray with an open heart and open hands today, to help you move past 'shoulds' and excuses to hear from his Spirit about what it means to serve.
- Ask the Spirit to pour out his love so that our serving will come from his abundance in our lives.
- Pray for yourself and for our church that we will be known by our love for others.

*"I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35*

## TRANSFORMING GRACE

One of the essential characteristics of fully participating in a church is being someone who serves. As followers of Jesus, we have become sons and daughters of God. Because we are now part of the family it is imperative that we continue the mission of our Savior who came to serve.

*Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25-28*

When we don't understand the transforming grace of Christ, we often live with lie-based thinking in regard to serving God and others:

- We can't make a difference.
- We aren't important.
- We aren't needed.
- We have nothing to offer.
- We don't have time.

But God changes everything. Read and pray through the following passage. Underline words that remind you of his grace. Circle words that remind you of your identity in Christ.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! ... For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do. Ephesians 2:4-10*

By God's grace, we are alive in Jesus; we are his workmanship; he has stuff for us to do!

## THIS IS **GOOD NEWS!**

- Ask God to help you overflow with gratitude for his work in your life.
- Thank him for the ways he is currently using you to serve. Pray for a deep satisfaction to do both the hidden and seen work of his kingdom.
- Look again at the lies we often believe when it comes to serving. Confess any that are true of you or any that aren't listed. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you believe that you are truly alive, God's workmanship, and that he has good work for you to do.
- Thank him that by his grace we are his servants.

## **ACTIVE FAITH**

A Jesus person is committed to serving others with humility. Serving does, in fact, take practice. Through faith in Jesus and trust in his work in our lives, we humble ourselves and practice loving and serving others.

*The greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matthew 23:11-12*

If this becomes your normal mode of operation, in turn becoming the church's normal mode of operation, then the contagiousness of the



gospel is limitless. As each family member develops the discipline of serving, it will strengthen their spiritual gifting and give them a vision of where they can most effectively serve.

Look beyond yourself to the people around you and ask what they may need and how you can help.

- Ask God to give you spiritual eyes to see the needs of people in your life (Matthew 13:16).
  - Pray for the courage to serve the people in your life in tangible ways. Ask God to help you not dismiss “small” ideas that he may give you (Zephaniah 4:10).
  - Pray through the following list of ideas. Commit to following through in one or two acts of service over the next two weeks. Ask for God’s help to practice serving others.
- Take a meal to someone.
  - Help someone with yard work. (Email [angel@secondmi.org](mailto:angel@secondmi.org) for opportunities.)
  - Write a note of appreciation to a coworker, teacher, or neighbor.
  - Smile at and tip your barista.
  - Write a note of gratitude and encouragement for the Bonillas Elementary staff.
  - Offer childcare to a friend to give them a couple hours of free time.
  - Add your own ideas to this list or ask a friend to help you brainstorm ways to show loving kindness to people in your life.

## **Serving in Second Mile**

*Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.*  
*Galatians 6:9-10*

You are part of the family of God. We each belong to one another. Read Romans 12:3-8 and pray through how this passage is demonstrated in your own life:

- Do you see yourself as belonging to the body of Christ?
- How do you use your spiritual gifts, talents, and resources to serve the family of God?
- How would you measure your faith according to how you are serving in the church?
- Do you believe you are needed, valued, wanted, and important in the Second Mile family?

- Pray through ways you are serving in Second Mile. Thank God for using you in these ways. (Again, do not dismiss what you may view as small.)
- If you are not serving within the church, pause and ponder why. Ask God to search your heart, to help you understand your own motives, and to give you a desire to “work for the good of all” (Galatians 6:10).
- Prayerfully consider the following list of opportunities within our church. Ask God if he would have you serve in any of these specific ministries. Send an inquiry email.
- Trust that God will show you where to serve, that he doesn’t intend for you to do everything, and that he has prepared good work for you to do.

### The Gathering

- Hospitality Team (Britt Gouge - brittgouge@icloud.com)
- Praying weekly with the prayer team (Nate Edwards - nate@secondmi.org)
- Volunteering with Second Mile Kids and/or youth (Cara DeSmidt - kidmincara@gmail.com, John Weatherford - john@secondmi.org)
- Amplify Team (Angela DeSoto - angela@secondmi.org)

### Core Communities

- Train to become a facilitator (David Gouge - david@secondmi.org)
- Use your home to host a Core Community
- Take time to invest in others through discipleship
- Become an advocate for community partnerships through your Core Community

### Community Life and Loving Tucson

- Iron & Iron (David Gouge - david@secondmi.org)
- Moxie (Angel Haynes - angel@secondmi.org)
- Serve teenagers and college students (John Weatherford - john@secondmi.org)
- Serve Tucson through the Arts
- Communications
- Develop new community partnerships and serve the ones we currently support. (For a list of Second Mile’s current partnerships see *Praying for Various Ministries* on page 27 of this booklet.)
- Pray on behalf of our City

### Global Partners

- Contribute to the needs of our Thailand partnership (Ally & Garrett Hoanin - ghoanin@gmail.com)

- Contribute to the needs of our Japan partnership
- Become part of a global team (David Gouge - david@secondmi.org)
- Develop other global partnerships
- Strategically pray for our global partners

The possibilities are endless and the opportunity is yours. Focus your heart and mind on Jesus and he will adjust your attitude, help you become aware, and move you into action. Let 2024 be a year where Second Milers practice serving!

*Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything in love. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14*

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58*

## Friday — Feasting

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Acts 2:42*

*"Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10*

"To be sure, food keeps us alive, but that is only its smallest and most temporary work. Its eternal purpose is to furnish our sensibilities against the day when we shall sit down at the heavenly banquet and see how gracious the Lord is. Nourishment is necessary only for a while; what we shall need forever is taste." The Supper of the Lamb by Robert Farrar Capon

## TRANSFORMING GRACE

The purpose of feasting is to remind ourselves of God's generosity. He is abundant in love, mercy, and grace to us. We must practice enjoying his good gifts and what better way than to sit at a table with fellow feasters, partaking in good food, good drink, and good conversation.

Scarcity, busyness, and isolation push back against our ability to revel in Christ's abundance. Take time to write down a few ways these burdens rob your enjoyment of his abundance.

- Confess any tendency you may have to overfill your schedule with that which prevents you from enjoying God's presence. Ask him to help you make room for his good gifts.
- Thank God that in him our souls will be satisfied as if with the richest of foods (Psalm 63:5).
- Ponder and believe that the Lord is your Good Shepherd. He is with you and because of him, your cup overflows (Psalm 23).

*So thank God for his marvelous love,  
for his miracle mercy to the children he loves.  
He poured great drafts of water down parched throats;  
the starved and hungry got plenty to eat. Psalm 107:8-9 (MSG)*

## GOOD NEWS

*Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35*  
The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ remind us that "evil and death, suffering and loss, sorrow and tears, will not have

the final word” (Every Moment Holy, Liturgy for Feasting with Friends). We celebrate this good news for ourselves and extend this invitation to others! We must not hoard the Bread of Life, but share him again and again, inviting everyone we can to enjoy this feast with us.

Jesus told the parable of a large banquet saying, *“Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”* He explained that a man prepared a banquet and invited many people to come. Sadly, each person who was invited turned down the invitation. Therefore, the master invited unexpected guests to the feast: “the poor, maimed, blind, and lame.” Read this parable in Luke 14:15-24.

- Thank God for your brothers and sisters around the world with whom we will feast when Jesus returns.
- Thank God for your Second Mile brothers and sisters with whom you celebrate the joy of salvation.
- Thank God for your friends and family that share in the goodness of knowing Jesus, our bread of life.

Now think of people in your life that do not yet know Jesus. Have you told them about the banquet that Jesus is preparing? Can you imagine sitting with them at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9)?

- Ask God to give you the conviction to share the gospel with people in your life.
- Pray for a few people by name, asking God for their salvation.

Practice the discipline of hospitality. Consider hosting a meal or going out for dinner with friends who don’t know Jesus.

- Ask God to give you the spiritual gift of evangelism and hospitality and the vision to use these gifts in your own personality and temperament.
- While you enjoy good food, ask God to help you share the good news.

## **ACTIVE FAITH**

What could be better for a Friday evening than the practice of feasting? Feast with a few or many on this day of our Week of Prayer and Practice.

This practice will require intentionality, vulnerability, and generosity.

- Some of us will need to be intentional with our time, home, and resources and invite people to join us.
- Some of us will need to be vulnerable and ask to join an evening feast.
- Some of us will need to be generous with our invitations and open up

more seats at our tables and include others.

- All of us are in need of a communal reminder that we are not alone and Jesus will one day return and we will feast with him together.

*On this mountain, the Lord of Armies will prepare for all the peoples a feast of choice meat, a feast with aged wine, prime cuts of choice meat, fine vintage wine. On this mountain he will swallow up the burial shroud, the shroud over all the peoples, the sheet covering all the nations. When he has swallowed up death once and for all, the Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove his people's disgrace from the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken. On that day it will be said, "Look, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he has saved us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him. Let's rejoice and be glad in his salvation." Isaiah 25:6-9*

Gather with some Second Mile brothers and sisters to partake of good food, good drink, and good conversation.

- Keep it simple — make a pot of soup, your favorite recipe, or order take-out.
- Start your meal by reading the Feasting with Friends liturgy. The QR code below will take you directly to a link for the liturgy. (Don't miss this. It is a meaningful way to start your feast.)
- Discuss how the Week of Prayer has been for everyone.
- Look through the Praying for Various Ministries section and pray for a few areas together as a group.
- Spend time praying for Second Mile as we launch reading Gather and Welcome as a church family.

Make plans for how you will continue to enjoy the practice of feasting with friends throughout 2024.

*Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying, "Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns! Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself." Revelation 19:6-7*

*The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! Revelation 22:17, 20*

Feasting with Friends Liturgy



## Saturday - Sabbath

*For the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy. Exodus 20:11*

Practicing Sabbath means drawing near to God by resting in his provision. It means trusting God to accomplish in six days what we believe will take seven.

## TRANSFORMING GRACE

“Sabbath is a way of life. (Hebrews 4:3 & 9–11) It sets us free from bondage to our own efforts. Only in this way can we come to the power and joy of a radiant life in ministry, a blessing to all we touch. And yet Sabbath is almost totally absent from the existence of contemporary Christians and their ministers.” - Dallas Willard

For many in the modern western church, Sabbath is not only absent from their normal mode of operation, but it comes loaded with cultural baggage and social stigma that make even beginning the practice daunting. In a society where being overworked, busy, and exhausted are badges of honor and the ideas of slowing down, resting, and being content are often dismissed as laziness or lack of ambition, it is no wonder that many Christians struggle to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

The Sabbath is a gift. Jesus makes a point of this in Mark 2:27 when he reminds the Pharisees that *“The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. So then, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”*

Practicing the Sabbath allows us to trust God to provide for us, acknowledging that he alone is the true Provider. God alone will take care of our every need. It reminds us that the world does not turn because of anything we do. Though God does not need to rest, he modeled rest for our benefit because we are finite and in need of rest. It reminds us that at the end of each day the one in control is God.

## GOOD NEWS

Sabbath is a kindness, given to us by a good God that knows we struggle with feeling worthy. The God who created you knows that you need rest. Rest from work, rest from comparison, rest from the barrage

of advertisements, rest from anxiety, rest from the world. This is not commanded because he's adding another burden onto us. Matthew 11:28-30 tells us that he wants to relieve our burdens. He wants to take them. Sabbath is commanded because God knows our tendency to want to prove we can do it by ourselves, that we will be tempted to try to prove our worthiness, or simply because we think it feels better to be busy than sit with him and with others.

For some this idea of rest seems far-fetched and unattainable, for others it seems idealistic and simplistic for our modern world. We may be unsettled by the idea of resting in stillness for more than a few moments, but God promises that he has given us this Sabbath (Exodus 16:29), that it is a good gift, and that it is a sign that he is the Lord who consecrates us (Exodus 31:13).

What does intentional Sabbath look like in our culture? A good starting point is to ask yourself whether something is restful/worshipful or productive. Sabbath should be filled with joy, rest, and worship. If an activity leads you to these things, it's okay to engage it on the Sabbath. If an activity is productive, it's probably not something to do on the Sabbath. An example would be reading. Some people find reading joyful, worshipful, and restful. For those people, reading would be a wonderful activity for the Sabbath. However, if you're reading for school/work/productivity, it's probably not going to fit into that category.

Note about screens: For many, our screens are used to help us "rest." They may help us distract ourselves from a hard day/anxious thoughts and we may use them to unwind. However, they do not give us true rest, not the kind God gives us. Countless studies have shown that our phones make us more anxious. Sabbath from screens is essential to being able to get to a point where we can truly hear from the Holy Spirit and quiet our spirits in him. If this makes you defensive, pay attention to those feelings and ask God if there's something deeper going on. Setting your screens aside may be a work of discipline, but will get easier if you make it a habit.

## ACTIVE FAITH

As you begin to enter into the idea sabbath rest think deeply on this prayer from Christ Church London (<https://christchurchlondon.org/2021/05/a-prayer-for-sabbath/>)

*God of rest,  
Today I make the active choice  
To enter into your rest,*



*And to join with you  
In delighting in this good world you have made,  
And dreaming of the perfect world you will remake.  
I choose to tune out,  
Of demands and deadlines,  
Of performance pressures,  
Of flickering screens,  
Of that which robs my soul of joy,  
And the ways in which the world  
Seeks to define and shape my identity.*

*I choose to tune in,  
To your affirmation and love,  
To the celebration of freedom,  
To worship and your word,  
To the enjoyment of that which fills my soul with joy,  
And reminds me of my identity in Christ,  
As a deeply loved child of God.*

*Amen*

- Ask God for help resting in his presence.
- Ask him to help you know what your Sabbath should look like.

Plan a fun meal with your family or group of friends (or both!) around the table. Light candles, pray a psalm, and thank God for his provision and care for us. Don't forget to include a fun dessert.

Set aside a predetermined amount of time to rest from screens. Ideally this would be for your whole Sabbath, but for today, see if you can go from breakfast to after dinner. Work your way up to a full day.

**Suggested activities for your Sabbath** (these may or may not be restful for you!):

- Get into nature.
- If you have kids, engage with them on their level knowing you don't have anything else to get done during this time. Play their favorite toys, build Legos, play an analog game.
- Go on a walk.
- Read a book.
- Listen to music.
- Get out your old board games. Do a puzzle.
- Create – bake, paint, draw, build, plant.
- Paint your nails.

- Talk to each other.
- Participate in the Night of Worship and Prayer at 6:00pm.

After your time of Sabbath, reflect on how you feel. Were you uncomfortable not being productive? If so, ask God to help you find your worth in him and not in what you do. Were you anxious without noise or being able to check your phone? If so, ask God to help you find your peace in him.

Sabbath is a discipline. If this is your first time being intentional in your rest, remember that this is a thing that builds over time. Regular rest in God is a habit that will bear fruit in unexpected ways.

Suggested reading:

*The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer  
*Sabbath* by Dan Allender

## Praying for Various Ministries

Throughout 2024 please continue praying for the various ministries of Second Mile and ministries Second Mile supports.

### Second Mile

*We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

*And [Jesus] himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Ephesians 4:11-13*

Please continue praying for our pastors, staff members, and ministry leaders and ministries. Pray, encourage, and support them throughout this year. Pray that God will continue to raise up more pastors and leaders in Second Mile.

- Pastors: Nate Edwards, David Gouge, Angel Haynes, Chad Haynes
- Staff: Cara DeSmidt, Angela DeSoto, John Weatherford
- Ministries: Children, Youth, Amplify team, Hospitality, Church Management Team, Finance, Core Community facilitators, Prayer team

Second Mile supports several ministries and missionaries with prayer, finances, and volunteers. Please ask God to make them vessels of healing, renewal, and gospel proclamation. Second Mile also gives out of our church budget to various needs in our city, country, and around the world throughout the year.

### Local Ministries/Organizations

- Tucson Refugee Ministry - <https://www.tucsonrefugeeministry.com>
- Bonillas Elementary School - our neighborhood school
- Fall Family Fun - serving our neighborhood on Halloween
- Seeds Community Center - Christe LePeau, follow on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/seedscommunitycenter/](https://www.instagram.com/seedscommunitycenter/)
- Christian Family Care - <https://cfcare.org/>
- Hands of Hope - <https://handsofhopetucson.com/>
- Lauren Araiza, Young Life - <https://giving.younglife.org/LaurenMegofna>
- Josh & Diane Buck - new to Second Mile, city church planters

## National Ministries

- The Bible Project - <https://bibleproject.com/>
- Practicing the Way - <https://www.practicingtheway.org/>
- Lovely Village/Jesus Said Love - <https://jesussaidlove.com/>

## Global Missions

- International Justice Mission - [ijm.org](http://ijm.org)
- Second Mile gives out of our church budget to various needs around the world throughout the year. This includes disaster relief, mission trips, and strategic partnerships. Pray that we would be ready to engage these needs with wisdom and generosity.

### Ally and Garrett Hoanin

- Pray that they would experience the Lord's abundance and not grow weary as they continue to raise financial support for their mission.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment when planning for departure, that uncertainty regarding Maisie's growth would resolve and give them confidence to leave the country.
- Please pray that God would be preparing Thai friends for them.
- Pray for the Northern Thai people - that God would bless them beyond measure, and that they may come to know Him through Christ. Pray specifically for the spiritual and practical needs of the families working with Kingdom Kids that are affected by disability.
- Pray Colossians 4:3-4 over the Hoanins- that doors would be opened to speak the gospel and that they would do so clearly among the Thai people.

### Evan and Audrey Eusey, Sapporo, Japan

- Please continue to pray for Japan and for the ministry God has given them there.
- Pray that they will be able to use the heightened spiritual awareness of the New Year to share about God who gives us new hearts.
- Pray also for wisdom for Japanese Christians to honor their families without compromising their allegiance to the Lord.
- Pray for Lily, who's been reading the Bible with Audrey for over a year. She seems very close to faith, but doesn't want to disappoint her mother, who is involved in a Japanese religious sect. Pray for wisdom in how to honor and respect her mother, but also respond to the truth she has learned.

## Answered Prayer

God hears us when we pray and answers according to his will because he loves us, gives good gifts to us, and is faithful to accomplish his purposes through the prayers of his children. Spend time reading and rejoicing over these answered prayers. Thank God for his kindness and generosity to our church and to the individuals who shared answers. Please take time to think through and thank God for how he met you in 2023.

*“Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.” Matthew 7:7-11*

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

The consistency of monthly praying the Lord's Prayer, reciting the Apostles' Creed, and taking communion in the gatherings throughout the year formed us in 2023.

In February, Ally and Garrett Hoanin traveled to Thailand with David and Britt Gouge as support for a vision trip. God confirmed the team and ministry location for the Hoanins! They hosted an info meeting for our church and continue to share their needs, prayers, and hopes for their mission to Thailand. Let's keep praying and supporting this dear family!

Juliane Cole taught a Spanish class for Second Mile and is considering teaching another class soon.

Becky Schmidgall and Alex Cole led our church family to host a baby shower through our Tucson Refugee Ministry partnership. We were able to share the love and generosity of Christ with five families.

Nicky Wingate and Corrie Smith led several gatherings for moms in Second Mile. They continue to invest in women and raise up other women to do the same.

The Church Management Team worked with Matt Withers and others to implement some much needed building renovations.

God continues to provide financially for Second Mile through people's

generosity which then allows our church to support various ministries locally, nationally, and globally.

Last year we asked God how he might want us to support Bonillas Elementary School, our neighborhood school. He provided a partnership with the school which has been beneficial to us and them! We provided school supplies, food for staff, and extra requested items and support as the principal made the needs known. We hope for a fruitful friendship with Bonillas for years to come. Please keep asking God to help us love and serve well.

We hosted a Good Friday seder meal and worship night. God generously encouraged our church family as we remembered Jesus' sacrifice.

During the month of July we worshiped in one gathering together. The pre-gathering fellowship was convivial and our family filled the gathering space each week. Angela led Second Mile's first choir which helped lead our family to joy-filled worship.

We shifted much of the vision and strategy for Second Mile Kids this year. In June we asked you to serve one or two Sundays; you filled the schedule, had fun, and valued the kids. For the school year, each class had at least one, weekly teacher to provide the children with consistency of care and investment. This has been a tremendous success, more than we could have asked or imagined. It takes much work for Cara to fill the schedule each semester, but God shows himself to be faithful in providing servant leader volunteers.

John Weatherford cultivated a great team of youth leaders for our teenagers. Many adults invest in them through one-on-one mentoring, weekly Bible studies, Wednesday night youth, and more. God continues to provide for this important next generation investment.

Chad and Angel hosted two dinners for 20 - 25 year olds to discover their thoughts and desires concerning Second Mile. Attendees were engaged (and well fed!) We look forward to how God will continue to direct us in loving and reaching the next generation.

God continues to bring people to Second Mile who are looking for a home. We welcomed many new people this year through Discover Second Mile, Walking the Second Mile, and covenant membership. May we be a family of grace people, good news people, and faith people that honors God in everything.

Fall Family Fun was another huge success. We are thankful for God's

direction and provision to serve in a seemingly easy, yet meaningful event.

David prepared and facilitated another phase of Equip. David and Britt hosted a prototype group in their home in the fall. Please continue to ask God to use this endeavor so we will be “equipped for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12).

After the Iron & Iron retreat, three different gatherings were planned for follow-up, conversation, and breakfast. Men came together to encourage each other to integrate spiritual practices into their everyday lives.

In 2024, we finished the Galatians series, studied several Psalms, and celebrated Advent and Easter. We also started our current Acts message series. We have studied 17 chapters through 38 messages. The Holy Spirit continues to shape and change Second Mile through God’s Word.

We prayed for Sarah Jenista’s health throughout 2023. God continues to sustain her life. Please keep praying for her and for her husband, Chis. May God sustain and build their faith and heal Sarah’s body.

God has tenderly held Rana Cameron through the cancer battle of the last several years. His faithfulness to her and Stuart is tangible, and in his kindness, he has even grown their love and devotion to him. Do not stop praying for Rana and Stuart and for Alec and Sarah. In their own words: “Rana is unwavering in her faith, and confident in her future in eternity with Jesus. We believe that even if she isn’t healed physically here on earth, there will be a day where she is pain free and whole in heaven, and we are thankful for that hope. We are praying for people to see Rana’s faith and peace in Jesus and be encouraged in their own faith journey. Our family really believes Jesus is holding us, and has not failed us and we are so thankful for the hope we have in Him. We hope you are met with his comfort as you read this and as we know that so many of you are also holding your own heavy life circumstances as you pray for us with ours.”

The Schmidgall Core Community continues its adopt-a-park to serve our city. Did you know they adopted Hoffman Park near El Centro? They serve our neighborhood monthly by keeping this park cleaned up. We often pray we will be a church who “goes the second mile” and this Core Community allows themselves to be an answer to this prayer.

Sarah Cameron: “Second Mile youth has continued to be an answer to prayers for our family. The way that John and all of the youth volunteers have come alongside our girls this year has been healing and restorative to our family. Caleb, Morgan, and so many others have intentionally

sought out our girls on Sundays, learned things about their lives, and have been intentional in making our kids feel like part of the church as a whole. John learning about pigs and horses, and leading a Bible study at our home has helped our kids feel safe to engage and has ministered to our family. Aluvia mentoring Elly has been life giving and meaningful to her (and us). We are so blessed by 2M youth!”

Anonymous: “God has provided my daily bread. I prayed for so many miracles but He answered by providing daily bread. It wasn’t what I wanted but His steadfastness was exactly what I needed.”

Kelly & Dallas Shingler: “So many ways God has met us in answered prayer this year. Healthy baby after a miscarriage — he spoke to my heart,” “I do not want this heartache for you but I will use it,” and he did! God has used that valley to grow our family, not only in the physical with a healthy baby this year but in the spiritual. With deeper marriage and sweet closeness of going forehead to forehead with Jesus in mourning. Other answers: connecting with a Core Community and other Second Mile families, paternity leave, renewing our hearts as individuals and in marriage, work stuff, childcare stuff, worrying stuff... the little details and the big things God has been faithful and present.”

Jenna Miles: “Last January, I felt a calm reassurance that the Holy Spirit had a miracle in store for us in 2023. I don’t know when or how I felt it, but one day I felt certain it would be true. I assumed it meant that we would be able to adopt our daughter Zay and get her out of the foster care system. Prompted by Luke 18, I began insistently praying that she would be able to exit the system by summer. We also had a foster son in our home at that time, and we were fervently praying that he would get to reunite with his mom. I talked about Luke 18 so often that our core group now calls it “persistent widow energy” or “dat PWE” (trademark Caleb Jackson). By March, I had my eyes so fixed on our foster kids’ circumstances that I was shocked to find out I was pregnant. We had walked through a painful loss, years of infertility, and now we had two tiny infants in our home. The pregnancy felt more terrifying than miraculous. But the months wore on and the pregnancy turned from scary to healthy and joyful. After much PWE, our foster son reunited with his mom in June. We got the news in October that we would be able to adopt Zay in 2024. And I gave birth to our healthy baby boy a week later. This year was full of persevering, but also full of God’s abundant goodness and kindness. We are so grateful for these answered prayers and for the joyful miracles of our children.”

Kim Goswitz: “Second Mile as a church and as a community has been an answer to prayer. [During COVID I knew] I needed a church body that



was more than just on Sundays. Asked a close friend about churches she would recommend and Second Mile was one of them. I came and instantly fell in love with 2M. The atmosphere, the worship, the preaching straight from the Word of God, the genuine friendliness and kindness and concern for me was just humbling and such a blessing. I've been able to dive in and share with women [in the Moxie group on the app] things I needed prayer for and they prayed for me, stood beside me, and sat with me in the midst of really hard things! I truly love Second Mile. Only been going here for about 2 years but I'm so excited to get more involved, to join a Core Community and to continue growing and learning and praising my Savior with all you beautiful people. Also I struggle with an invisible chronic illness and I had surgery last year for it and I am and finally finally beginning to feel relief from some debilitating symptoms! My Second Mile family has been there with me the entire way praying and believing for me. I never hesitated to post in Moxie whenever I needed prayer and support although it's hard to be in a dark season and feel like I'm always needing prayer. People I didn't know well encouraged and prayed for me and I have deepened friendships with some women through it all. The road to recovery is long but I have so much hope in Jesus and in my healing and I don't think I would have got to this point without 2M."

Chelsea Houchin: (Personal): "John and I got engaged in March of 2023. Shortly before that we found out that Rana's cancer was back. While that came with an entire wave of sadness, fear, and unknown, it also brought on selfish wondering if we would have her at our wedding later in the year. In the midst of the excitement about our future, it was bittersweet walking through it with cancer back in the picture. We prayed for healing, for time, and for peace. Selfishly, I prayed that Rana would be at my wedding in the fall. After one round of chemo we got the unexpected- news that the cancer was gone. Rana got to be a part of picking out my wedding dress (via FaceTime) and was there at my bridal shower. On September 1, 2023, John and I got married (and Angel officiated!) Rana and Stuart walked down the aisle and took their seats with the family." (Second Mile): "While our Second Mile community rallied around to be present and active in support of the Camerons during yet another scary time, John and I felt tangibly celebrated in the midst. Others prayed my "selfish prayer" for me without me even knowing at the time. The Camerons, especially Sarah and Alec, showered us with support even in the middle of it all. While we may have found out devastating news just a week after the wedding, I am painfully aware of the goodness of God through His people through all of it."

Andrea Brobeck: (Personal): "2023 was a doozy. I walked through seeking healing mentally, linking arms and really tightening grips with

one of the people I love the most, and pressing in during a challenging school year. So, what was my prayer through it all? “God, let me be dependent on you because what comes from me is limited, subpar, and worn down.” Second Mile family, my circumstances didn’t drastically change. What I am aware of, focus on, and seek did change. In studying Isaiah and Revelation, I see God’s promises more clearly than ever before. Isaiah 65:17, “For I will create new heavens and a new earth; the past events will not be remembered or come to mind.” The pain, frustration, anger, heartache will not even be able to enter my thoughts when God completes His promises. God continually answers my daily prayer by providing me what I need from the tiny speck of creation that is my world to the greater eternal picture. My hope is that one day, face to face, ‘I will follow the lamb wherever he goes’ -Revelation 14:4.” (Second Mile): “Studying scripture with various members of Second Mile lit up my world! There was no greater encouragement or energizer than gathering together to discuss the Bible. I was ecstatic to hear how others approached the text, rabbit holes they went down, questions they were asking/wrestling with, and ways in which God was moving in their lives. I see so many people in Second Mile as my family after being a part of the book and Bible studies. I’ve gained a level of comfort, security, and confidence in being a part of the body of Second Mile that I have never had before this year.”

Anonymous: “I’m thankful for the people and purpose of my core group. The “come as you are” expectation allows me the grace to be a part of conversations that remind me of the truth of Jesus. The consistency of those relationships provide me a place to be vulnerable with others, to be challenged by others, and to go deeper in my relationship with Jesus and with others. Conversations that consistently remind me of the importance of laying down my self-focus and fixing my eyes on Jesus above my life’s circumstances. It makes the challenges of living life together worth the struggle that sometimes exists because life is meant to be lived in community.”

Austin Lillestol: (Personal) “It’s less a single answer to prayer and more a constant answer to prayers. This has been a hard year starting a new job, and many days are filled with prayers of “Just help me through this.” God continues to give me exactly what I need exactly when I need it, whether it’s strength to perform or the words to speak to a crowd. He makes words come to mind and pushes me forward when I want to step back. His goodness has been on constant display for me this year and though I often forget it, He gently reminds me time and again that He hears my prayers and is always willing to help.” (Second Mile): “This year the Second Mile family has been a place of refreshment and ease. Work has been stressful and I frequently lose sight of God, but coming

to church on Sunday has been a weekly reset for me. Singing worship songs, catching up with friends, and feeling seen have been a wonderful reminder of what a gift Second Mile is.”

Tamara Lillestol: (Personal): “To be honest, when I first saw Angel’s post on the Moxie page about sharing, I thought “honestly, not much good has happened this year so I don’t have anything to share.” But then I felt immediate conviction. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that even if some big miracle or amazing thing doesn’t happen in my life, it doesn’t mean that God hasn’t been there answering prayers day after day. He has listened to every prayer I have prayed this year, whether it was at 9pm before I go to bed or at 3am when I can’t sleep. He has helped me through some really hard circumstances, from my husband being injured at work and being on light duty to healing my dogs after they were sick for months. God has been present and there for me and has answered prayers so many times this year and I am so grateful for this community of believers who encourages me to keep walking the narrow path and be grateful for the multitude of ways that God has been faithful to me.” (Second Mile): “God used the Second Mile family to link arms with me when I was enduring difficult things. I so often feel like I need to be the one to serve and I need to be the one to love other people, but I don’t deserve to be served and loved in return. This year, I felt overwhelming love by my Second Mile family when I was struggling. I received so many encouraging words and sound advice from women whom I deeply admire when I was having a hard time. I felt appreciated and seen for the service I have done for our church in the past, and encouragement to take care of myself in this season without guilt or shame. I am so grateful for our church that doesn’t burn people out and sees each of us as individuals who all have different capacities. Sometimes, we have cups that are overflowing and other times we feel like our cup has a hole at the bottom of it and fear it will never fill up again. God and our church love us and care for us no matter where we are, and I am grateful that our church encourages us to use our giftings and be obedient to God in the ways He is asking us to serve and love our body.”

Meredith Amadee: (Personal): “During a really long season of medical challenges and trauma, I stopped doing something I really enjoyed: exercising and, most specifically, lifting weights. After lots of healing, beginning in early 2023, I began working out again. This is something I had visualized and prayed about for a while and wasn’t sure if it was going to happen again. I am so grateful to God for the ability he’s given my body to move. It allows me to feel strong and capable. It feels like a blessing every time I’m able to go to the gym and move heavy weights. I am grateful for the answered prayer of being able to move my body again in this way.” (Second Mile): “This past year, specifically around

the holidays, I was able to reflect on how grateful I am for my Second Mile family and the life giving relationships I have that have stemmed from this church community. I think it can be really hard to have deep, meaningful relationships as an adult in this day and age and I feel overwhelmingly blessed at the relationships God has given me because of 2M. They are truly friends that feel like family; support us in marriage, encourage growth and depth in relationship to God, encourage healing, etc. What a gift!”

Angela DeSoto: “For several years I have been talking with God about what it would look like for me to go back to school. I felt like He wanted me to continue to wait for various reasons. This year through prayer, in April, I felt a clear ‘go-ahead’ to pursue furthering my education. I enrolled in the summer and have felt such peace in starting this new chapter. I don’t know what the future holds but I am enjoying the process of taking classes and looking forward to pursuing a nursing degree in the coming years.”

Gaby Flores: “During last year’s week of prayer and fasting, I was in the process of looking to purchase my first home. During that time, I prayed that whatever home God provided would be a place where I could share God’s love and practice hospitality, both with those from Second Mile and with my neighbors. As I reflect on this past year, I see how God has abundantly answered this prayer and I see how his provision, care and love have been present during the entire process. Not only has he placed me in a neighborhood close to Second Mile, but it has been a place where I have found kind, generous neighbors who look out for one another, and a place where I have been able to open my home to neighbors, friends and family alike and being continually reminded of God’s faithfulness to his children. The entire process has allowed me to continue relying on God’s wisdom and discernment and the importance of waiting on the Lord (Lamentations 3:24).”

Ericka Eller: (Personal): “God has helped me to understand His character and the depths of His love after losing my husband suddenly in March of 2023. I have received comfort and peace and hope after praying to experience Him in my grief.” (Second Mile): “I was new to the Second Mile family and I was surrounded by kindness and friendship and prayers. I have also begun to create new community in this new season of my life. I appreciate the care, concern, and wisdom extended to me as I navigate “what’s next?”.”

Emily Weatherford: “Fifteen women studied the first part of Exodus in the spring and eight of us finished the rest of it in the fall. God was faithful to show us more of who He is and how his plan was always to

be among his people. The Holy Spirit allowed us the privilege of being able to go deeper in his word and with each other.”

Lindsey Wiederstein: (Personal): “In 2023, God helped me work through anxiety and fear in a specific area of my life. Through prayer, counseling, fasting, and community, I “overcame” this fear and made a decision that I wouldn’t have without his transformation in me. My anxiety/fear isn’t gone completely, but I’m now capable of moving in the direction God wants me to without letting this fear dictate my choice. He has been so good to me.” (Second Mile): “I spoke at women’s retreat for the first time this last year. I had prayed that God would allow me to share whatever he wanted to communicate through me, that he’d equip me in my preparation, and that my session would be an act of worship to him. He answered all those prayers with an abundant “yes.” I’m thankful to all of the people (so many!) who helped me prepare, who refined my session and encouraged me in the process—Angel, the other women who taught at retreat, my husband, my core community, and the people who’ve walked closely with me through life the past few years.”

Sara Ranney: (Personal): “Our son Isaac was conceived when doctors told Jeremy and I it would be completely impossible. Also healing in 2020 to my 10 year long illness that was supposed to put me in the grave!” (Second Mile): “Through wonderful inclusion during our newcomer phase and welcoming us.”

Erin Anderelli: “After the week of prayer last year, I walked away with the direction to embrace discomfort, pray more, and consume less. I had no idea that God would use those things to heal me and free me of wounds and burdens that I had carried for 30 years. I had to choose to trust God in the face of fear and confusion and sometimes intense discomfort. He proved himself more trustworthy than I could have ever imagined at every step. His absolute trustworthiness led me through metanoia and taught me that the way of repentance is unburdening to him, turning toward him, and choosing life with him. As a result, my prayer for our Second Mile family has been to truly know that our God is trustworthy and that walking with Jesus through metanoia is so worth it.”

Carah Haynes: “At the end of 2022 I was accepted into the UofA nursing program in Gilbert after not getting in the first semester I applied. I was extremely scared to move after being in Tucson my whole life and to leave the relationships behind that I had built the last two and a half years in college. I cried many tears wishing I had gotten into the Tucson program to be close to my community. However, now at the end of 2023, I can see clearly how God’s plan was better than my own. The Gilbert program is shorter than Tucson, so I am able to graduate on time in May

rather than graduating in December. Now that graduation is in sight, I am incredibly thankful. This also means I get to marry my fiancé Nathan before he starts medical school and be able to be partners during all the crazy transitions that come after college. I also saw my dependence on God grow as I had to embark on my own pretty much for the first time. Trust has been a big theme throughout my college years, and he keeps calling to me to trust him daily. It's not something that I can just learn once and move on (as much as I wish that to be true.)"

Austin Smith: (Personal): "God responded "yes" to what we felt was a bold prayer to bring one of my coworkers and his family into our church body. We are very grateful!" (Second Mile): "The brothers and sisters in my core community continue to show me what it means to be a person devoted to prayer. This has been a huge growth point for me, this year. Through this community growth, we have become much more aware of the work God is already doing."

Corrie Smith: "Our family has prayed for the last 7-8 years asking God if he would like us to have someone live in our extra space in our house. This year God graciously brought one of our favorite people into our home to live and it was a deep blessing to our whole family."

Tia Edwards: "Serving in Second Mile Kids on a weekly basis has been a treasured part of connecting with my church family in 2023. The beauty of walking chronologically through the Bible with the preschoolers the first part of the year and the 2nd/3rd graders this last quarter has blessed me in so many ways. I love engaging with the same group of kids each week getting a glimpse into their lives, building relationships with them and seeing the ways the Holy Spirit is drawing the kids of our church closer to Himself. The prayers they pray, the things they observe, and the questions that they ask are a deep encouragement to my own faith."

*I will make known the Lord's faithful love and the Lord's praiseworthy acts, because of all the Lord has done for us—even the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, which he did for them based on his compassion and the abundance of his faithful love. Isaiah 63:7*

*I will thank the Lord with all my heart; I will declare all your wondrous works. I will rejoice and boast about you; I will sing about your name, Most High. Psalm 9:1-2*

*I will remember the Lord's works; yes, I will remember your ancient wonders. I will reflect on all you have done and meditate on your actions. Psalm 77:1-2*