

Annual Pastor Report – Chris Hamilton, Pastor of Congregational Life

Every year, I like to have a focal point to drive all the ministries. For this past year, my focus has been on discipleship. The aim was to create more opportunities to help people grow spiritually and to take that next step in their faith. A working definition I use for what it means to be a disciple is: A disciple of Jesus is someone who follows Jesus, is being changed by Him, is committed to the mission of Jesus through fellowship with other believers, personal study, stewardship, and living as a witness. Below is how I used this focus point to drive ministry opportunities this past year.

Fellowship

We are called to live in community with one another. We need others to learn from, to grow with, and to walk alongside us. We cannot remain in isolation in our faith; we need others. Therefore, I wanted to give plenty of opportunities for people to connect in various ways. The most significant way we had these opportunities was through different huddles throughout the year. A huddle is simply an opportunity to gather through a shared activity or experience because of a common interest. Throughout the year, we had 12 different huddles. A lot of them repeated and continued frequently throughout the year. On average, we had at least one opportunity each month for people to come out and connect with others here at Mountain View Chapel. The goal of these huddles is to expand the circle of friendships and connections with others who think like you, believe like you, and who could be a great encouragement to your faith walk. Some examples of these huddles included pickleball, volleyball, monthly senior breakfasts, meet-and-eat groups, fireside chats at my house, park playdates, praying for pars (golf outings), family mini-golf and ice cream, a church softball team, and many more.

Personal Study

A disciple is someone who connects with God, spends time in His Word to know Him, and grows in knowledge as they study His Word with others. Throughout the year, we had nine regular groups that met for Bible study and four closed groups (at capacity and not open to others). We had 13 groups, and three of them were brand-new this year. This year, we also created and emailed a week-long devotional based on Sunday morning's message, called the Monday Morning Drop. This devotion included scripture readings for each day, along with follow-up questions and reflections based on the sermon. We also had nine special events scattered throughout the year—men's breakfasts, women's retreat, worship nights, and other studies and opportunities to get in the Word with others.

Stewardship

This was one spot I really wanted to focus on this year: investing time and energy in serving others through mission work. This past year, we had six different mission opportunities: two trips to North Carolina for disaster relief, two fundraising participations with Mercy Ministries (beyond Sanctity of Life Sunday), and a special event in September called Free Bay to bless others locally in our community. Moving forward, we have budgeted additional funds to continue sending two mission teams out each year. I'm looking forward to finding more ways to serve in Douglasville and the greater area.

Another aspect of stewardship is using our gifts to serve others. One way we do that is through our New Members Lunch. Here, we talk about membership as a partnership that is not one-sided but requires a commitment to plug in and use the gifts God has given you to serve others. We ask everyone to write down gifts and ministries they'd be interested in, and then I connect them with ministry leaders. This past year, we had two new members' lunches (February and September) with 19 people attending—and all 19 are now plugged in and serving in ministry in different ways!

Other Roles

In addition to my primary roles mentioned above, this year I had the joy of preach on occasion (six times this year), teaching in different groups at church (Awana, Pathfinders, etc.), I lead a community group every other week, helped with membership and baptism interviews, joined the worship team rotation, sang in the choir, helped with planning and leading the Easter Extravaganza, served at VBS, and oversaw our guest services team (bulletin greeters and visitor connections).

Looking Ahead

My prayer for this coming year is based on Jesus' words: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." My prayer is that we will continue to create opportunities for people to grow in their love for God and to love their neighbors as an outflow of His love for us.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to me. I'd love to connect with you. Thank you.

-- Pastor Chris Hamilton