

## **An update from Vergil Brown Redemption Church in Portland, OR**

Lord willing, our church will celebrate its second anniversary in September.

I want to give you an update on Redemption Church but first I want to praise God for his gracious work in and through the ministry. It was about 3 years ago when our family set out on a faith journey to plant a new church in the city. We embarked knowing that we did not know much about what would happen. I had to bear lots of uncertainty and lean hard on Jesus. Since we have moved forward in faith we have experienced the faithfulness of our God.

*Charles Spurgeon said, We have great demands, but Christ has great supplies. Between here and heaven, we may have greater wants than we have yet known. But all along the journey, every resting place is ready; provisions are laid up, good cheer is stored, and nothing has been overlooked. The commissary of the eternal is absolutely perfect.*

I can testify that this is true. Our God has richly supplied all that we have needed and has exceeded our expectations. The Lord has done good work in family and in our church. I hope that my story is an encouragement to you. And I also hope that my update is an encouragement to Good Shepherd; you have invested generously in our church and the Lord used your generosity to fund his purposes.

### **Ministry Recap**

- Over the last year we have added lots of new members to our church and we continue to see new visitors each Sunday. Many of our visitors are unchurched and don't yet believe the gospel.
- We added two new elders in March; bringing our total to three.
- We baptized 4 people so far this year with more to come soon. One of the ladies had never set foot in a church before and never heard the gospel; but now she believes.
- I preached Exodus, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Samuel.
- We added a first hour class (Sunday school) to our Sunday morning. We use the class to teach Christian basics, systematic theology, and topical series.
- We started a women's Bible study that was very well received. Two ladies in our church led the group and taught Jude and Titus. That study reached lots of women and unchurched women, so who had never opened a Bible before and others who didn't know that Titus was a New Testament book.
- We held two winter coat/blanket drives in partnership with Scott School and The Portland Rescue Mission. Those two coat/blanket drives created meaningful connections with our neighbors and gave our church an opportunity to be ministers of mercy in the city.

- We gather for prayer every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday evening. Those prayer meetings have become a real highlight for our members. I routinely hear from people regarding how blessed they've been by the prayer meetings. The eagerness to pray and growing attendance at our prayer meetings is a mark of health.
- Just last week we held a community yard sale on the church lawn to benefit Scott School (lots of kids below the poverty line). That yard sale raised money for their 'help fund' and it gave us the opportunity to invite lots of people to our church. And we have a community block party planned for September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Those two events are designed to engage our surrounding neighborhood.
- We are currently underway in an evangelism training course. We run this course on Sunday mornings. We are seeking to better equip our people to be confident to declare the gospel.
- I led my first church planting residency. A young man from southwest Louisiana completed our 9-month residency program and then returned to his hometown with the hope of planting there one day.
- I have taken on the responsibility of training aspiring church planting. I am currently leading a cohort of 4 guys through a 9-month training.
- I serve on the board of Brilliance Labs, a local non-profit that seeks to plant new churches and launch new businesses in hard places.
- I serve on my kid's school's advisory council, I coached by daughter's basketball team, and I coached my middle student's math club. Being engaged in the community in these ways has given me lots of opportunities to demonstrate and declare the gospel. And it has brought more people into our church.

### **Future Ministry Plans**

- A new church planting resident will begin our program this fall. He is a newly married student at Western Seminary. He and his wife became members a short time ago.
- Our student ministry program which is made up of middle school and high school students, will begin meeting weekly on Wednesday nights starting September 7<sup>th</sup>.
- I have a growing relationship with several African-American pastors in the city and I dream of establishing a new network of sorts for like-minded enough pastors.
- Our church needs deacons. We hope to identify deacon candidates in the next year.
- We need to grow in number. I believe that we plant and water but God gives the increase. Patience and prayer are required. But there are also greater efforts that we can make to attract more visitors. We plan to do more of that work.

### **Budget**

We have been so pleased with the generosity of our church and the continued support of our partners. The responsibility of this budget is split between internal giving and outside support. As a young church plant, we don't expect our membership to carry the full weight of our budget. By God's grace he has provided us with amazing partnerships that supplement our church's giving.