

LOVE / LIVE / SERVE



GATEWAYCHURCH DOWNTOWN

A Letter From The Pastor

Dear Gateway family and friends,

February feels like a bit of the calm after the storm. We've hit Christmas and New Year's and broken our resolutions. MLK had his day, the groundhog is gone, and the Superbowl is past. Take a breath.

Oh and as a reminder: Resolutions are meant to be broken! You aren't perfect. Go figure. That's why Jesus came! Was it a good intention? Then dust yourself off and get right back to your plan. If it was a good, Christ-honoring plan, then better to make progress imperfectly than give up because you can't be perfect.

A few updates coming your way:

PRAYER. First, this Sunday (Feb. 18) at 6:30 is our prayer meeting. We've been having dinner at 5:30 before prayer meetings. It's totally acceptable to just come to the prayer meeting, but the meal is there to make things a bit easier amidst our busy lives. There's no cost for that. Also, the prayer meeting is more than just prayer. We're still trying to get it back to where we were just before the pandemic, but most prayer meetings will include singing 3-5 songs and a very short message and sometimes a testimony. At the prayer meeting the emphasis is more on the congregation speaking to God and less on a preacher speaking to the congregation. We really hope you'll make these meetings a priority in 2024.

WORSHIP SERVICE. Second, we've been having some conversations about how we can make the worship service tighter and more accessible. Hopefully you've noticed more consistency in the length of the services and shorter transitions between elements. We want to push more into excellence—not because we value the excellence itself but because of what it says about God himself. Excellence is not about a particular style or flavor. It means striving to do what we do as well as we can.

This is an ongoing project, and there have been a number of formal and informal conversations with key ministry leaders, the deacons, the elders, etc. Don't expect drastic changes, but I think it's fair to expect some continual tweaking over the next few months.

MISSION TRIPS. There will almost certainly be opportunities for regional and international mission trips this spring and/or summer. Keep an eye out for details! If you know that's something you want to participate in, then feel free to reach out to me.

CONTRIBUTIONS. If you made a contribution to Gateway in 2023 that wasn't anonymous, you should have received a giving statement last month. If you didn't see it, you can always find old statements in the Church Center App by navigating to Give → My giving → Statements . Maybe this is a good time to check whether your giving still reflects how God has prospered you and your cheerful desire. Maybe you received a raise or took a pay cut and

haven't reassessed your budget. Maybe you are not a member but have been generously contributing to this mission but feel called to give some of that to your home church. Maybe everything is just right. We just want you to be faithful.

May God prosper you greatly in and by his Spirit, and may we all thereby "attain ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

In the name of our Savior, the Head of his church,



Love. Live. Serve

As I offered the pastoral prayer this past Sunday, I reflected on the fact that there is so much going on in our world that can lead a person to take his or her eye off the ball. Then, I preached from Revelation 2:18–29 in which Jesus rebukes the church in Thyatira for—in many ways—doing just that.

We are approaching the 2-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine—a conflict approaching a half million casualties—and just passed the 4-month anniversary of Hamas's attack on Israel—resulting in casualties of nearly 120,000 people with two Cuyahoga Counties' worth of people displaced from their homes. Given Cuyahoga County's large Jewish and Ukrainian populations, these conflicts hit home more than others.

The Middle Eastern conflict has tied up shipping through the Red Sea due to hostilities from the Houthi movement, whose seizure of the capital in 2014 kicked off a civil war in Yemen that has not come to an end. Meanwhile, protests continue to rock Iran, and a contentious election cycle in Pakistan only concluded early Monday morning but with no clear party winner. All this makes a contentious region more on edge than ever.

Then of course, we have some spirited debates of our own closer to home. The primary election is on March 19 (update your registration by February 20!), and the general election is on November 5. (Poll workers are still needed, by the way!) Despite what you might be led to believe, there's more on the ballot than just the presidential contest, but I'm not foolish enough to think that won't be the race that consumes our attention. Pundits are already warning us of certain doom if their preferred candidate doesn't win.

It may feel at times like the world is spinning out of control. It isn't.

I want to encourage you, early in this chaotic year, with a simple message. Our members and those who have been lately worshiping with us will find these words familiar:

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

— Revelation 1:12–18 (ESV)

The Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, is on the throne. He reigns eternally, and he is conducting history to its perfect end when "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

If these things are true—and they are—then aren't the words of Paul, locked in a Roman jail, perfectly sensible—no, demanded!—for us who are called Christians?

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 4:5b–7 (ESV)

Jesus is on the throne, and because Jesus is on the throne, then if we are his, peace is ours. And if peace is ours, then let us show it. Let us cast anxiety into the lake of fire where it belongs with its children, death and Hades (Revelation 20:14).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Prayer Service
Feb 18th @ 6:30pm

Women's Brunch
March 9th @ 9am

POINTS OF PRAYER

War in Ukraine, Isreal,
and Yemen

Protests in Iran and
unrest in Pakistan

Upcoming preliminary
elections

SERMON SCHEDULE

February 18
Deuteronomy 15:19-23 |
Love, Law, and the Lord |
Ryan Miller

February 25
Revelation 3:1-6 | Letters:
Sardis | Chris Schwab

March 3
Reveleation 3:7-13 | Letters:
Philadelphia | Chris Schwab

March 10
Revelation 3:14-22 | Letters:
Laodicea | Chris Schwab

Update from Missions/Partners

We have some exciting news from one of our closest partners! For those who don't know, Emmaus Theological Seminary (formerly Ohio Theological Institute) is a relatively new school bringing theological education to Northeast Ohio and beyond consistent with its values of embodied formation, ecclesial theology, and humble orthodoxy. They offer certificates as well as associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. Due to the level of our partnership, Emmaus will be allowing Gateway's members to audit courses for free. This is a tremendous opportunity for many of you to grow in your knowledge of the Faith and stretch your academic muscles. It might even be the beginning of a more formal pursuit of theological education. We've had members audit courses in the past, and with convenient times and remote options for many courses, maybe you'll check one out, too. Maybe you want to learn the story arc of the Bible better. Maybe you want to learn some Greek. Maybe you're interested in Christian ethics or just how to study the Bible. Perhaps you'd like to learn about biblical counseling. The blessing of auditing a course is that it is very low commitment but can still have a tremendous reward.