

“CHANGING LIVES TOGETHER”
Celebration Sunday
May 1, 2016

Note: *On Sunday, May 1, the people of Main Street gathered for “One Big Service” in the Sanctuary to celebrate all the ministries of Main Street and the successful conclusion of the first phase of our “Building Up, Reaching Out” capital campaign.*

Stories of Life Change (shared by Claude Kayler, Amy Burton, and Rick Carter)

At this time we would like to share some brief stories of how God has used the ministries of Main Street to change lives. These are snippets from notes and testimonies that we have received from you. Understand that Amy and Rick and I stand before you, not as the doers, but as the proclaimers of what God has done through you.

I would like to thank each one who participated in sending Christmas cards to shut-ins. I think I have enjoyed this gift from my fellow church members as much as anything else in my life.

-Thurman and Ruth Hinson

Thank you for the wonderful prayer shawl given to my wife Melody. I can't tell you what a comfort it has been to her as she undergoes treatments.

-Jack Johnston

WOW! 50 units of blood were collected at the Blood Drive, and our goal was only 39 units!

-Eloise Anderson and Libby Bond

I am very grateful for your cards, flowers, food, calls and visits during my hospitalization and recovery. To say that our church family is a caring congregation is an understatement.

-Henrietta Barrett

We had made two trips to Florida in two weeks—one to see mother, and one for her funeral. It meant so much to us for you to share your love through a meal.

-A Bereavement Meal recipient

Thank you so much for Gavin's prayer shawl. He's been sleeping with it at night. Your prayers will keep him strong.

-The Hills

We had a member facing hardship who had received an eviction notice. We were able to bring her rent up to date and keep her in her home.

-A UMW Circle

My daughter was leaving for college. My husband's dad was declining rapidly. My life was chaotic. But Tim and I found that, rather than adding to our stress, Disciple Bible Study helped us through it.

-Sandra Hemphill

Disciple Bible Study is habit forming. During my Disciple studies, I learned to read the Bible not just to understand the words, but to live in those words.

-Chadwick Stamper

Seventy plus years ago we were called to serve and protect our great country; we proudly answered the call. Seventy years later God has called the "Never Forget Ministry" to encourage us. Your gifts of cards, banquets, concerts, and more give us something to look forward to. Your love makes us walk a little taller in our senior years.

-Harold & Faye Redding

The goal of children's ministry is to help children learn about God and put their faith in action. We have around 175 children involved across all events, with 40% of them being guests and visitors.

-The Children's Council

Sometimes we have said that our youth choir is not about singing, but about fellowship. We do outreach in the community, and mission projects on our trips to the beach. We build each other up in Christian love. Oh, and we sing too!

-The Alpha and Omega Youth Choir

Our music ministries include 15 different groups. Our mission is to facilitate worship that both honors God and builds up the church so that the church can go out into the world and share the good news.

-Main Street music ministries

At the awards ceremony at Piney Grove, every one of the Main Street Preschool kids got their reading and math award. Also, several received a good citizenship award. This preschool is not only turning out children with strong academics but also teaching them to be good people.

-The Sammons family

Last year we had a preschool family that suddenly became homeless. When we learned of the situation, we bought the children clothing and immediate supplies. The mom is now happy in her new home and was extremely thankful for a preschool that was able to help them.

-JoAnn Clifton, Preschool Director

The incredible people at Bethany Café get there bright and early to prepare a special meal. They offer a three-course meal served in stages so that we all receive royal treatment. This program has changed our lives and the lives of many in our community.

-The Lorenz Family

As one who helps prepare and serve the food, nothing touches your heart more than to know you are feeding people physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

- A Bethany Café Volunteer

We've had many classes where we were brought to tears by sharing stories of serving the least, the last and the lost. The most wonderful gift we've received is knowing that God's love became real and life-changing to others.

-The Seafarers Sunday School Class

The giant Advent wreath on your church property helped to beautify our town. Thank you.

-Kernersville Community Appearance Commission

We had one individual who really did not want to deal with multiple sclerosis, but was dragged to our support group. After some time, this person decided to ride with our "Bike MS" team. Last year this individual trained hard and rode 35 miles. Our group helped this person understand that you can live a full life despite living with MS.

-Multiple Sclerosis Support Group

If our group had to rent a rehearsal space, we probably would not be able to exist.

-Heart of the Triad Chorus

We are so grateful to Main Street for making it possible for Lidia's children to have school clothes. They simply would not have had the required school uniforms without your help. Your generous gift also allowed each child to get casual clothes and shoes.

- Vickie Sigmon, Open Arms Community

Each winter New Story Church opens its doors to the homeless of Winston Salem. And every Wednesday, Main Street brings an amazing meal to feed our hungry guests. But it doesn't stop there, because your folks stay around to serve the meal with grace and kindness.

-Pastor Steve Smith, New Story Church

Rick was living on the streets of East Winston. He had a drug problem. His family had little to do with him. Rick began coming to feedings at Rupert Bell Park, and he started asking questions about Jesus. Rick discovered he had cancer while living on the streets. We prayed that Rick would get off the streets. He is now in his own apartment. He has gained weight and looks good. Now Rick comes to church every chance he gets and he calls me his pastor.

-Carol Fulton, Children of Zion Ministries

Main Street is changing the lives of prisoners through Kairos Prison Ministry. The prayer strips, the monetary support, and yes, the cookies. They call us the Kernersville Crowd, and many times they have told us that if it wasn't for your support, this ministry would have ceased to function long ago.

-Don Stutts

You guys have done big work in Egbe, Nigeria over the past year, touching many, many lives. Egbe Hospital aims to care for every patient with the compassion of Jesus Christ. People walk for as long as three days to reach the hospital, making this place the center of one of the largest evangelistic movements in western Africa! Thank you for allowing us to be here, sharing in this with you.

-Nick and Katie Riddle

We are seeing lives changed through Bible teaching in the Ukraine and central Asia. Last weekend we ran a two day camp for children from refugee families. They played games, had plenty of food, and heard the gospel.

-Esther Mueller

Redeemed Girl Ministries has traveled across the country to eight college campuses. We've seen 518 young women commit their lives to Christ! I wish each of you could have been there to hear the stories of changed lives on each campus.

-Emily Wilburn

We received this note from a woman who listens to Trans World Radio: "Through your radio programs, I have learned to praise God in every situation, and to be a person with firm faith. May God bless you all at Trans World Radio!"

-Grant and Jenna Hodgins

After serving 9 years in the Dominican Republic, God began a new church and I became the founding pastor. Now we have four services a week.

-Connie DeLeo

We are on a team of 4 missionary families working among an unreached people group in Mozambique. When our teammates first came to this area there were no Christian believers. Today we are hosting Bible studies and seeing lives changed through Christ.

-Daryl and Leah Burnette

And there you have just a few of the ways that God is changing lives through you. And this is just a taste. I'm sure that for every story we read there are at least 5 others that could be told.

Main Street United Methodist Church: God is using you to change lives!

Not to us, Lord, not to us

But to your name be the glory!

Sermon: “Changing Lives Together” – Dr. Claude Kayler

Please turn with me to Acts 2, verses 42 through 47. If you’re using one of our pew Bibles, you’ll find it on page 120 in the New Testament. This is a description of the early church:

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

- Acts 2:42-47 New Revised Standard Version

If anyone ever asks me, “Claude what’s your vision for the church?” I take them to this passage.

This is the church at its finest. They were devoted to God. They were devoted to each other. They were outrageously generous—it says they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. And God was in their midst! They saw signs and wonders every day! And the best part of all is what it says in v. 47: “*And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*”

In other words, lives were being changed. *They were changing lives together!*

Now, I look at Acts 2:42-47, and I see some of these same things going on at Main Street:

- They were devoted to the apostles’ teaching – where do you find the apostles’ teaching nowadays? In the Bible. And I have seen an amazing commitment to Bible Study here at Main Street:
 - o Something like 350 of you have taken Disciple Bible Study. Some of you have taken Disciple 1, 2, 3, 4, Christian Believer, and Jesus in the Gospels!
 - o Around 100 of you come to my Bible study on Wednesday night or Thursday morning
 - o You have one of the strongest Sunday School programs I’ve ever seen.
- They were devoted to each other: Main Street is an extremely caring congregation. When somebody’s in need, when we need a meal for a funeral, or for somebody coming out of the hospital, we never have to pull hen’s teeth to find somebody willing to help!
- They were devoted to the breaking of bread and to prayer : That’s a reference to Holy Communion, which we do once a month on Sundays, and every Wednesday in Oasis.

- They were outrageously generous: Last year at Main Street, you gave (roughly) \$170,000 to outreach over and above the regular outreach budget of \$55,000!
- The Lord added to their number daily: Main Street has grown steadily for 175 years, and last year was no exception—you received 38 new members, 11 of those by profession of faith.
- Acts 2 talks about evidence that God was at work in the church – and if you haven’t seen that here today, you haven’t been listening!

And then most of all – this passage describes people whose lives are being changed. And I feel certain that everybody here today could point to some way that God has used this church to change your life:

- Some of you grew up in this church, and you would say, “Main Street UMC is a big part of who I am today”
- Some of you found Main Street just recently, and you might say, “This church was there for me when I needed it.”
- Some of you are from other cities, other states, other countries, and Main Street has become your home away from home.
- Some of you raised your kids in this church, and you’re so grateful for how they’ve been taught, nurtured, and mentored.
- Some of you got married here, got baptized here, got confirmed here
- Some of you met your spouse in this church
- Some of you would say that your life was changed because of what you experienced in our youth group, or in our Sunday School, or on a mission trip
- Some of you learned how to build things because of this church
- Some of you learned how to knit because of this church
- Some of you learned how to bake cookies that are exactly 2 ½ inches in diameter because of this church
- Some of you learned how to study the Bible in this church—you’ve gone deeper into the Bible than you ever thought possible, and you have grown spiritually like never before

- Some of you gave your life to Jesus in this church: Maybe you knelt at this altar, or the altar in the chapel, and you said, “Jesus, I’m going to follow you” – and your life hasn’t been the same since.

Some people whose lives have been changed aren’t here today, because they’ve gone into the world as missionaries—or because they’re among the many members of this church who have gone into Christian service or pastoral ministry. (You know, that’s a real sign of a church’s health, when people leave the church to go into ministry.)

I feel certain that everybody here today can point to some way, big or small, that God has used this church to change your life. And you know what, Main Street? God has used you to change *my* life! I love being your pastor! You are a positive, active, energetic, committed group of people. You’re open to new people. You’re willing to try new things. I’ve been here two years and I’ve never once heard the 7 last words of the church: *“We’ve never done it that way before.”*

Lorie and I are in a very important stage of life right now. Shortly after we moved here we became grandparents, and our grandson lives in Durham (oh, and his parents do too.) And in the last six or seven months my father has not been doing well—and he lives in Greensboro. Because of Main Street—because you allowed us to come here—we’re living much, much, much closer to these family members than we were before, when we lived way up in the mountains and it took hours to get here!

But even more – the support you’ve given us—the love you’ve shown us—both in the joy of the grandson and the sorrow with my dad—your love and support and caring has been amazing. I am not exaggerating when I say that being a part of this church has changed our lives!

So here’s the question: Who else is out there whose life needs to be changed?

- Who else in this community is going through some of the hard things that some of you are going through, but they have no church family to support them?
- Who else in this community needs prayer?
- Who else in this community needs to study God’s Word?
- Who in this community is trying to raise children without the support and guidance of the church?
- Who in this community has a teenage son or daughter who needs a youth group?
- Who in this community is in the later years of life and feels lonely and needs something meaningful to do?
- Who else in this community is in desperate need of what God has entrusted to Main Street United Methodist Church?

At this time I'd like to recognize Chadwick Stamper who's going to say a few words about what's coming next.

CHADWICK: Today you've gotten a taste of all the things going on at Main Street. You've had a chance to see all the ways this church is "Building Up, Reaching Out, and Changing Lives Together."

Now, in case it hasn't occurred to you yet, let me state the obvious: In the very near future, these ministries are going to need more space. The money you've already given to Building Up, Reaching Out is going to go a long way to make that space possible.

Now, listen to this next part very carefully:

- We need to build more space
- We need to build it sooner, rather than later
- And we need to make sure that what we build matches the God-inspired vision of the future of Main St. church"

We've been dreaming of the possibilities and potential ministries and missions enabled by additional space for almost 20 years. We've imagined different versions of what that new space might look like. One possibility for that additional space is represented in the model on display in the Narthex. But Tom Vaught, our building committee chair, will tell you that the model was never meant to be a set in stone plan for the next building.

As your church leaders, the Trustees and the Capital Campaign committee, and the Church Council, have prayed over the next steps in realizing our dreams for Main Street, we've recognized that over the years, the needs of the church have changed and the needs of the Kernersville community have changed.

Let me say that again: The needs of the church have changed. And the needs of the community have changed.

For example: The largest demographic moving into this area in the next ten years is going to be people going into retirement. One of the things that people need in the later years of life is Sunday school rooms on the first floor. Do you know how many Sunday school rooms we currently have that you can get to without climbing steps? One.

The second largest demographic moving into this area is people 18-30 – that's the generation we call the Millennials. And that generation has some different ideas about what the church should be doing; for example, they're very passionate about making a difference in the world, and less passionate about maintaining the institution.

The needs of the church have changed. And the needs of the community have changed.

So in January of this year, the Church Council decided that we need "to clarify the church's vision before beginning our next building project." Last Sunday Marc Engle and Becky Lewis

introduced you to the Vision Process that's going on right now. We have a team of 12 people, working with a consultant from the conference office. Like Becky and Marc told you last Sunday, we're studying the community, and they're studying the church.

Please understand that this vision process is not just about the building. It's a vision for the whole church. It's a picture of the future. It's a ministry action plan. It's going to impact every area of our life as a church. It's about how God is going to use us to "change lives together."

So let me repeat:

The vision process is not just about the building.

It's not just about the building.

It's not just...what? **(about the building)**

That vision process is going to last 4-5 months, and then we're going to step back and say, "OK, how do we build to THAT?" We may find that the model out in the narthex is exactly what we need. We may find that God is calling us to do something different.

We can't tell you right now exactly what our new space is going to look like, but we can assure you of three things:

- 1- We are going to build *something*
- 2- Your gifts to Building Up Reaching Out will be used for building—we're not going to divert those funds to something else
- 3- Any new plans we come up with will be voted on by the congregation.

Hopefully later this year we're going to launch another formal pledge campaign like the one that just concluded. In the meantime, the Capital Campaign committee is requesting that you continue giving to the building fund at your current level. You've been giving for three years now, and you've gotten used to giving a certain amount. We would love it if you would just keep doing that. Because we need more space, and we're going to build *something*, and the more we can collect up front, the less we'll have to borrow, and the sooner we can break ground.

CLAUDE: Main Street is a church that's rooted in the past, but reaching for the future. We have a past that goes back over 175 years. But with all we've talked about today, we are looking ahead to a bright future.

So let's close this celebration service with a song that's rooted in the past, but looks ahead to the future. This is a good old gospel song from the past. A bunch of you probably grew up singing it. But this song looks ahead to a bright future: "To a home on God's celestial shore;" "To a land where joys will never end."

Let's stand together and sing, "I'll Fly Away," led by the combined choir, the Jubilee Praise Band, the youth choir, and the children's choir!