



*"Whoever believes in me will do the works
I have been doing, and they will do even
greater things than these." John 14:12*

GREATER THINGS

A 40 DAY PRAYER GUIDE

for Living Creek as we seek the Greater Things God wants to do through us today, and will do through a new home for the ministry in the future.

March 12 - April 20



What a Difference 40 Days Can Make!

Why is the period of 40 days important?

Jesus, Moses, and Elijah fasted from food for 40 days.
40 days is considered a time of dedication.
Temporary changes over 40 days establish new lifestyle habits.
40 days of faith can change our future destiny!

These are exciting days for us at Living Creek as we pursue God's place and provision for a new home for this ministry. We also anticipate many ways God will use us in a new facility to serve and reach the community around us.

How to use the 40 Days of Prayer Journal:

1. Find a time and place where you can read and pray in peace.
2. If you miss a day, don't beat yourself up. Catch up on the next day.
3. Don't run through and read all of the daily devotions in one sitting. Be reflective in this 40 day season about what God is saying to you.
4. As we all pray together on the same theme, God will continue to unite our congregation.
5. Ask God to give you His eyes and ears so you can see and hear the people and situations around you. You may have a few times during the 40 days when the daily devotion for that day is exactly what you need to apply to a specific situation. At that moment, you will know that God is directing you through the prayers.
6. If you are married, or have children, you could set aside a time in the morning or evening to read and pray through the journal together.
7. Ask God to show you how He is calling and growing you to accomplish His purpose for your life and for the life of our church.

Section 1:

Greater Love

God's Love through Us

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"
(John 3:16).

This verse is quoted so often that we may have become desensitized to it. Think about it. You might be willing to give your own life for a loved one, but would you be willing to sacrifice your only child for anyone?

And what if you knew the majority of the people for whom the sacrifice was made would refuse to acknowledge it or even reject it outright? Would you still give your child for them?

What about the child who willingly left his home to face unthinkable horrors, knowing that only a small number of people would respond to His gift?

Do we in the church have that kind of love for each other?

What about our neighbors or strangers in the community around us or those who have deeply hurt or betrayed us? Are we willing to give up everything for them?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we speak of love without any concept of what it truly means to love someone. We as humans are not capable of loving the way You do. But You are capable of loving through us. Father, we ask for the ability to see everyone around us through Your eyes; to recognize that each person is created and loved by You regardless of any differences we may perceive. We humbly ask for Your love to flow in and through us so we may love fully, sacrificially, and unselfishly like You. This can only be done by the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit. Please transform us into the image of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, amen.

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

Sacrifice

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

No one can carry their love for a friend farther than this because when they give up their life, they give up all they have.

Most people would define love as an emotion, either affection, passion, or tenderness. But the Bible describes love in terms of sacrificial actions. Jesus said, *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”* While it's rarely necessary to die for the sake of another, genuine love usually involves some level of sacrifice.

The Greek word for this sacrificial love is agape. I like this definition of it: "Unconditional love that is always giving and impossible to take or be a taker. It devotes total commitment to seek your highest best no matter how anyone may respond. This form of love is totally selfless and does not change whether the love given is returned or not."

As Christians, we are expected to show unconditional, selfless love to others. Sacrificial, agape love doesn't keep score. If you want to love like Jesus loves, you have to put yourself aside. Agape is a love that gives, a love that does not demand or hold onto rights, but has the good of the other at heart.

Paul said in Ephesians 5:1-2, we are to *"be imitators...and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*

PRAYER:

Father, Your matchless love will descend to any depth to rescue us from our sin and save us in our deepest desperation. For You there is no stopping place, no limit to which You will not go to save a lost soul with Your infinite love and unlimited mercy. Father, grant us a measure of Your sacrificial love. Give us a desire for others that goes beyond human emotion and make us desperate for their souls. Help us grasp the depth of the love You have for us so we might display Your perfect love in our lives and the lives of others. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Rely on God

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"
(John 15:5).

Televisions are great! They bring news from around the world, allow us to see events that take place thousands of miles away, keep us informed and entertained, but only if plugged in.

Without electricity, a TV is nothing more than a giant paperweight. It just takes up space. It has great potential and great capability, but until it is connected to its power source, it serves no purpose.

We are the same. Unless we are "plugged in" to our spiritual power source, Jesus Christ, we are useless.

As a church, let us always remember that on our own, we can do nothing. We may desire to make great strides for the Kingdom, to reach the lost, to witness for our Lord. But that can only happen when we make our connection to Him our first priority. Otherwise, we make great strides toward nothing—we reach the lost and find we have nothing to give them.

During these 40 days of prayer, let's use them to draw on God's power within us.

PRAYER:

Lord, remind us at every step that when we trust in our own understanding, rely on our own strength, and follow our own wisdom, we fail. And also remind us that when we trust and obey, seeking Your path, striving to be faithful rather than successful, then Your Kingdom advances and we fulfill our purpose. In Jesus' name, amen.

Unity for All People

“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).

Can we truly be a church where our differences stop at the door? Will we stand side-by-side for the single cause of Christ? Can we care for the world without accommodating its secular views?

We are a diverse body of believers, different in many ways. Yet those differences help to extend our outreach, not prevent us from functioning as a unified body of believers. Unity does not mean “same,” it means to be “united in purpose.” Our connection through the transformation of the Holy Spirit should make us strong in that purpose and inseparable in our bond.

Yet the Christian church is in jeopardy of coming apart at the very core of what is intended to hold it together. Our unity is continually challenged as the secular world presses the church to change its focus; elevating individual freedoms to a position of greater significance than biblical truth.

We know Jesus died for all people. He reached out to sinners and unbelievers, yet He didn't fail to lovingly speak the truth regarding their hopeless condition. Jesus embraced the lost, not their sin.

Caring about lost souls is our commission. Understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in us and through us is our obligation. If we first unite in prayer, we will find ourselves united in purpose.

PRAYER:

Father, unify us in You. Fill us with Your Spirit and keep us of the same mind, with the same love and in full accord with Your desires, for both us and the world around us. Amen.

A Need for Godly Leadership

Did you know that Jesus called us to be godly leaders?

Leadership is influence.

It starts with leading ourselves.

Next, we lead others by our example.

Jesus calls His followers with His example: Love others. Serve others.

The greatest leaders are the greatest servers.

As godly leaders, we understand who is involved and why.

Understand who Jesus is.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Understand who we are because of Jesus.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Understand why Jesus called us.

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Paul, in Ephesians, gives us an idea of the big picture. (Remember: faith, not complete understanding, is required.) We now get to go out and share the reason for our hope: the Good News of Jesus Christ. Leaders who understand who they are in Christ equip other believers to do the same. The work of all believers is ministry. This work is not just for church staff and elders, but also worship leaders, volunteers and every other believer!

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for allowing us to walk with You in prayer. Thank You for the saving work that is Your Grace. All authority, all power comes from You. Help us today in the work You have called us to do. Help us to lead and equip others with the help of Your Holy Spirit and all the power that Your authority allows. Amen.

The Foundation of Family

Imagine that your home is in a floodplain. A huge storm strikes the area with record wind, rain, and flooding. When the storm is over and the waters subside, what is the condition of your home?

Jesus used that analogy to describe a wise and foolish builder (Matthew 7:24-27). One built on the rock, the other on sand. The home on the rock stood, yet possibly with a few scrapes and in need of some minor repair. But the home built on sand was gone, completely demolished. Families are like the houses we live in. So how is the foundation of your family and how are you building on it?

As goes the family, so goes the culture and its faith. Like Jesus' parable of the two builders, we need to prepare for storms. Jesus was a realist. Our way of life and our values will be attacked as followers of Jesus. The family is also under attack.

While we hope it never happens, is your family prepared for the storm? How will your family handle a tragedy, disease of a family member, or death of a family member?

The best solution is to build a great foundation from the ground up. It starts with spiritual leadership in the home, a single parent or a mother and father together, taking a stand and teaching their faith to the next generation. It is a home where the words and the reading from the Bible are common. It is a home where there is obvious trust in the Lord and prayer of thanksgiving for everything received.

When Joshua stood before the nation of Israel, he couldn't speak for the nation about their promised faithfulness to God, but he could speak for the family he led. He said, *"But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15).

PRAYER:

Lord, help us to build strong families. Whether we are a single member in a family who supports and encourages others, or a large family with many people, let us live by faith and let You reign in our hearts and our homes. We desire to build our lives on You and Your words. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

It's Your Turn to Pay

There is a game sometimes played between friends. Let's call it "Bill Tag." You go into a coffee shop with a friend and one of you pays for the other's coffee. Then the next time you meet together, the person who had their's paid for the last time says, "let me buy yours because you got mine last time." So it is "Bill Tag." Tag, you are it to pay the bill this time!

There is a problem with the game between real friends when you honestly can't remember whose turn it is to pay. The game can continue in some friendships for years, even decades. Sometimes the two people involved agree to pay for their own from now on.

Jesus would not have played this game of taking turns to pay the bill. This is what He taught about being generous and showing hospitality to others:

In Luke 14:12-14 Jesus says, *"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

Jesus encourages us to give without strings attached. Not only should we not keep score of whose turn it is to pay, but we should give first to those who have no way of paying us back.

Jesus modeled this for us perfectly through His death on the cross. He drove a nail through the debt of our sin with His very life. It is paid. We can never repay Him to even the score.

Instead, He asks us to do what He did—give to those who can not pay us back. Then the promise of the verse above is that God will repay us at the resurrection.

Who can you give to today that has no way of paying you back? What are some ways our church can give to others who have no way of paying it back?

PRAYER:

God, help us to have eyes to see the needs of those who need us the most. Let us be people who give of ourselves without expecting anything in return. Thank You for sending Jesus to pay our debts against You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Greater Patience

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you”
(James 1:19-21).

It's hard to drive in Chicagoland without getting angry, isn't it? People are driving at top speed all around us trying to get to their destination, sometimes while texting or checking their social media. When we see someone driving in a manner that endangers those around him, it's hard not to get angry and want to set that person straight! Have you ever been there?

In today's political climate, it's hard not to get angry when we hear people spout off beliefs that are wildly different than our own. Have you ever found your blood pressure rising while watching the news, scrolling Facebook, or reading the newspaper? How are we supposed to control it when it seems that many around us seemingly exist to make us mad?

James gives us a challenge in James 1:19, *“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”* Slow down. Breathe. Listen. Choose words carefully. Don't be too quick to get angry. How would our world change if we all did this? His next statement reminds us why: *“because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”*

What are we supposed to do when we find ourselves angry? James tells us to *“get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”* The very Word of God can save us. Let's be a people who aren't defined by what angers us. Instead, let's follow James' example and accept the Word of God and let our relationship with the Lord guide our lives!

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for hearing us and knowing us. We confess to You that we get angry. Help us to remember that being angry will not bring us to righteousness. May we shed that which doesn't bring us closer to You and help us to become the people that You've created us to be. In Jesus' name, amen.

Faith Instead of Fear

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

In today's world, fear is an emotion that we must deal with practically every day. People are fearful and scared by all of the conflict and violence that is reported daily in the news. It is important to remember that our faith can sustain us during these trying times. The psalmist declared his trust and faith in God. Psalm 56:3 states, *“When I am afraid, I will trust in you”* and Psalm 27:1 explains that *“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”* As the words of an old hymn state, “This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through.” By keeping our eyes upon Jesus, our fears will lessen and our faith will be increased. We cannot do this on our own. The Holy Spirit will guide us. All we have to do is put our complete trust in the Lord as we seek His presence in prayer daily.

PRAYER:

Dear God, help us trust in You as we continue our journey through this life. May our daily motto be, “Faith instead of Fear.” Strengthen us and teach us to depend on You more and more each day. Amen.

Day 10, March 21

Grace Instead of Judgment

Grace means we get something that we don't deserve, unmerited favor; something we not only receive, but that we also share with those we encounter.

God is abundant in grace. His greatest act of grace is the gift of salvation that He made available for all people through faith.

As a result of accepting His grace, He promises eternal life. It's the promise of a home one day in heaven with Him. His promise is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that one day Jesus the Christ will indeed return to earth to claim His purchased possession.

Jesus purchased every sinner with His own blood on the cross at Calvary.

"The bridge of grace will bear your weight, brother. Thousands of big sinners have gone across that bridge, yea, tens of thousands have gone over it. Some have been the chief of sinners and some have come at the very last of their days but the arch has never yielded beneath their weight. I will go with them trusting to the same support. It will bear me over as it has for them." ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus Christ, may Your grace be evident in us.

Father, may Your love shine from us.

Holy Spirit, may Your presence be known in us,
from now and evermore. Amen.

Section 2:

Greater Power

Clothed with Power

Power is a crucial element of witness, in fact a greater power must be present within a person in order to be effective. In Luke 24:49, Jesus mandates that the power must come first, *"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."* The work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community shapes us as disciples of Christ.

To be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit is essential in our attempt to meet the challenges of witnessing for Christ in today's changing culture. We are not going to successfully argue a person into the Kingdom, and guess what? We can't love someone into the Kingdom either. We can't serve enough, preach enough, or pray enough to get someone into the Kingdom. That's because whether or not someone trusts Christ is not dependent upon us. Its up to God.

The Holy Spirit is the One who draws people to Himself. God is the author and perfecter of our faith. Evangelization attests to both the transformative power of the Gospel and the mission of the Church to reach society and pass on the faith to future generations. It is a huge responsibility, but we are not on our own.

The Bible promises us this assistance.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

PRAYER:

Father, we believe that You intend to do wonderful things through us for Your glory. Humble us in our attempt to bear witness, and draw us into a deeper relationship with You. Give us the confidence of knowing You will empower us with Your Holy Spirit. Help us to battle the unbelief of our hearts and encourage us to immerse ourselves both in Your Word and in daily prayer as we seek this power. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus that You arm us for the spiritual battle that awaits. Amen.

God's power in us

When we try to do God's work in our own efforts we fall miserably short. It's not about us.

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power"
(1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

I don't think we really comprehend how important the power of the Holy Spirit is in carrying out God's commission. And Jesus said we would be given that power.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Why would God equip us with His power? So that we might accomplish His will and for His glory.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

PRAYER:

Father God, You hung the stars in the sky. You placed the planets in rotation around the sun. You created the earth and all that inhabits it. Your power and majesty are unlimited. We stand in awe of You. We want so much, to reach the lost in the communities around us. Please fill us with Your power, so that we may accomplish *"more than all we ask or imagine."* Without You Lord, our efforts are futile. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit, so we may be fearless in serving You. Put Your hand upon us so that all those around us would know You. For Your honor and glory, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Power to Live

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1).

The life God gives is abundantly richer and fuller. Life in Christ is lived on a higher plane because of His overflowing forgiveness, love, and guidance. But what does it mean to live a FULL LIFE in Christ? God wants us to offer ourselves as *“living sacrifices,”* daily laying aside our own desires to follow Him, putting all of our energy and resources at His feet and trusting Him to guide us. We do this out of gratitude because of His sacrifice. It is an act of worship on our part.

There is a song that says, “I will not offer anything that cost me nothing.” That’s sacrifice, it will cost something; your time, money, or sometimes, even your pride! It’s also a daily sacrifice, a selfless act of kindness or service, using talents for His glory and not earthly accolades.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You, for allowing me to live an earthly life while still homesick and longing for Heaven. Let me be, and show Christ in all that I do. Let my daily acts of worship be holy, acceptable, and worthy to You. Thank You for the model of sacrifice, that by Christ dying on the cross, You show Your abundant love and grace to us. Amen.

Day 14, March 25

Power to Love/Honor God

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment”
(Matthew 22:36-38).

A simple command, and yet, impossible to follow. Let’s take Peter, for example. Here was an apostle who claimed he’d never leave Jesus’ side, but denied Him publicly three times the very same night.

See, when Peter tried to love Jesus in his own strength, he failed; miserably.

But this was no surprise to Jesus. He knew Peter would betray Him. He didn’t approach the cross feeling abandoned by His friend. He went full of love, knowing that Peter’s life depended on it. After receiving Jesus’ grace, Peter received another gift: the Holy Spirit, who changed Peter from the inside out. As he began to live in the Spirit, his whole life became a daily act of worship and love for God. Peter began living without fear. He evangelized, performed miracles, and even died for his Lord.

We may try to fully love the Lord on our own, but we fail. And yet, He loves us with all of His heart, His soul, and His mind. And if we daily ask Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit, and to show us what His heart beats for, we too can find our lives becoming a daily act of worship.

PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, come fill me. Change me on the inside that I may be more and more like Jesus. Take away my fear as You attune my heart with the Father’s. May we, as a congregation, allow You to transform us from the inside out, so that our daily lives become depictions of our love for the Father. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Power to Love People

"Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14, ESV).

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, ESV).

Have you ever visited or attended a church and felt all alone, even though there were people everywhere? May we challenge ourselves to have the eyes of Jesus to look for those who are alone, or look like they could use a friend, or those we have never seen before. Possibly this is their first time at Living Creek. We have a wonderful Welcome Team in our parking lot and at our front doors, but I pray that as anyone walks through the lobby, or into the auditorium, or wherever they are at Rich South, they would feel Jesus' love surround them through each of us at Living Creek.

May we pray in the days ahead to look for those we can love. There are so many hurting people all around us: neighbors, in the stores, restaurants, sporting events, schools, small groups. Wherever we are, God can use each of us in mighty ways to love others through our words, actions, kindness, gentleness, patience, humility, and forgiveness. Love never ends.

PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father, as we pray today and in the days ahead, may God touch and use each of us mightily. May we open our hearts and minds to those You want us to love, pray for, reach out to, or become a friend to. As we seek You Father, please let us be still before You and listen to Your promptings; to reach out of our comfort zones; to lovingly serve one another; *"and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"* (Ephesians 5:2, ESV). In Your precious name we pray, amen.

Power to See and Hear Needs Around Us

David Livingstone said, "If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?"

Jesus gave us a commission, *"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:18).

Jesus calls His Church to continue the mission He started on earth. To do this, we have to be aware of our surroundings.

God has placed Living Creek in a unique position to reach many people from diverse backgrounds by having ministry centers in Monee, and worship space in Richton Park. We have a regional footprint from Chicago to Kankakee, Crown Point, Indiana to western Will County. We need to embrace the opportunity of the great diversity around us and continue to reflect our community where God has placed us. While we seek God to use us to reach the unchurched population within a few miles of our offices and worship location, the mission doesn't stop with those few. The message of hope from Jesus is for all people and at Living Creek, we need to be aware of all the opportunities around us.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank You for entrusting us with Your mission. God we need to have ears to hear Your words, eyes to see the people, and a heart to love them like You do. Let Your body at Living Creek be willing to go wherever You tell us to bring Your mission. Help us to meet the needs of the people around us both physically and spiritually. Help us to finish the race well, and never stop proclaiming Your good news until the moment You return. In Jesus' Holy name, amen.

Day 17, March 28

Power to Love Power to Serve

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1).

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price"
(1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

When two children want the same object, you will often hear both of them say, "Let go! This is mine." Some of us grow up and continue to play that game. We want more time or money for the time we invest. ("This is mine! I deserve it.") We want more from a relationship. ("You owe me!")

Can you imagine how our possessiveness is perceived by God? He is watching from Heaven and wants to remind us, "Let go! That is mine." Everything in the world is the Lord's. We are simply managers of all we have.

The interesting thing is, we don't even own ourselves. God bought us through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. We are His. How does God want you, His son or daughter, to live? Where does God want you to go? What does God want you to say? He paid for you. You are His.

PRAYER:

God and Father, we acknowledge that nothing we have is our own. Everything is Yours. God, we also commit our life to You. It is Yours, also. Order our steps this day. Help us to do and say only that which is pleasing to You. Amen.

Power to Give

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:11).

Do you find it hard to receive a gift from someone else? The more prone you are to pride and independence the harder it becomes to receive gifts. You might even have heard some generous person say, "Don't rob me of my blessing to give."

It goes both ways doesn't it? When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, we have received what is called an "indescribable gift" of grace. When we give back to God and to others, there is great joy and a satisfaction of being generous. God wired us this way. So we must freely receive and freely give in order to bless others.

Maybe this explains best what it means to be a "cheerful giver." We cheerfully receive gifts from others and we keep the blessing going as we cheerfully give to God and others. At Living Creek, we pray that we can all continue to be a cheerful conduit through which the blessings of God will flow.

PRAYER:

Father of Heaven, the giver of all good gifts, thank You for Your provision to us. Thank You for our education, our jobs, our abilities and even our friends, all of which You use to bless us. Help us to not be selfish, but to continue passing on the blessing through our generosity for the needs of others and the church of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.

Power to Tell

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

At times we forget what God has called us to do for Him. Sometimes we don't understand how God wants to use us to fulfill His purpose in reaching the whole world for Christ. I love to look at the mosaic pictures in the school hallway. They use hundreds of tiny individual pictures to create one larger picture.

This is what the body of Christ is like. As each of us understands that it is our purpose to share Christ with others, the overall picture becomes clearer. Some of us might say, "I can't talk about my faith to others. I don't know what to say." If this is your fear, remember that someone once said "actions speak louder than words."

So look for opportunities to show your faith to others in unexpected ways. Don't look for what you can get out of sharing Christ. Look for what God can get out of your sharing. You are one picture in a huge masterpiece that God is painting. Go and fulfill the purpose God has given you.

PRAYER:

Father, give me the courage and the opportunity to speak for You today. Help me to proudly carry the message of Jesus that has been sent to everyone. Let the power of the gospel change me and may the change be obvious to those around me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Power to Lead

“And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

True Christianity is hard. A life given over to Jesus is a cross to bear. It requires effort and concentration, work and sacrifice.

In many parts of the world, following Christ puts one's life in danger. There are places in which evangelism is a capital crime. And it seems that the Christians in those parts of the world nearly burst with faith. Their lives are filled to overflowing with the Spirit. The cross they bear, and the grace by which they bear it, is obvious to all.

In America, we live in a society in which it is pretty easy to be a Christian. No one is tossed into jail for reading a Bible. No one gets fired from their job for attending a church service. Oh, the media might snicker at us, and our politicians may patronize us, but we generally pay no real price for our faith. So, it is tempting to drift along with an “easy” faith, a faith that makes no demands, requires no sacrifices, causes us no distress.

Our enemy is subtle. He knows that a faith that never faces difficulty never grows strong. He knows that a faith that never requires anything from us can never give anything to us.

So our cross is of a different kind, not as obvious, but no less heavy.

We must constantly resist the urge to stay comfortable, constantly be on guard against taking the easy road, constantly seek to reach a world that, though it may not persecute us, also doesn't take us seriously. That task is not as clear-cut as that faced by some, but it is no less a burden, and carrying it requires no less of God's grace.

PRAYER:

Lord, help us to realize that it must be our goal to radically change this world, not just live at peace with it. It must be our goal to lead lives that are inspirational, not merely comfortable. It must be our goal to inform this lost world that “good enough” isn't good enough—that there is something better. Amen.

Section 3:

Greater Purpose

God's purpose for you

"I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me"
(Psalm 57:2).

God wants to give us purpose. He actually wants to entrust us with divine wisdom. That's really incredible news! We've been created to attach our tiny, little lives to something absolutely majestic and glorious so that we can experience a sense of wonder and eternal significance.

We take on significance not because of who or what we are in ourselves, but because we participate in the life and purposes of our Creator. God has blessed us with minds to create and the power to imagine. Imagination is a tool whereby we cooperate with Him to participate in His divine nature and fulfill our God-given purpose.

Imagination is fueled through input. The first step toward finding our purpose can be found in the Bible. Through His Word we begin to understand the heart of God. He desires us to have a joyful, ambitious, and purposeful life in accordance with His will.

PRAYER:

Father, help us to connect to You like never before. Reveal in us Your greater purpose for our lives. Show us how we can make a difference for You in our families, our church, and in our community. Give us the desire to be exactly who You intended us to be. Give us direction as we seek Your will for both our lives and our eternal future. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Our Mission - Helping people follow Jesus

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

When you speak to a stranger for more than a few minutes you begin to understand their passions. It could be they speak excitedly about their family, a sports team, a hobby, or their career. Some of these people might display their passion in the clothes and jewelry they are wearing, or even an exposed tattoo.

What would a stranger learn about you after a few minutes of conversation? If we are following Jesus as the Lord of our lives, it should eventually become obvious to the other person.

Jesus died for everyone in the world yet the Bible says that not everyone will be saved. It will only be those who follow Jesus on the "narrow path" that will make it to eternal life. If you are on that path, you are called to help people find the way to Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter if they have never followed him, or if they have lost their way and left the path, we are to help them follow Christ more closely.

At Living Creek, we pray that we will always be ready to "*give the reason for the hope*" that we have in Jesus Christ. Making it to eternal life in Heaven, and taking as many people as possible with us, should be our greatest passion.

PRAYER:

God in Heaven, help us to be passionate about the hope of eternal life which we only have in Jesus Christ. Help our faith to become respectfully obvious to those around us. Help our words to be inviting to others. And may we never be ashamed of the One who died to give us life. Amen.

Our Values

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

Do you ever wonder what it was like to be a part of the first church in Jerusalem? It was different than today. They had no buildings, nor orderly church services. They met daily in homes. On the first day of the week, they had a simple service including the Lord's supper.

Yet we relate to them today by seeking to represent Christ with certain values. Acts 2:42 describes 4 specific values among others taught in the New Testament: teaching (doctrine and truth), fellowship (sharing in meals and needs of each other), breaking of bread (literally the breaking of "the" bread, the Lord's supper), and prayer.

At Living Creek, we have identified a list of five values which are very similar. These seem to be sincerely represented in our church fellowship.

Truth - teaching the Bible as our authority and foundation

Grace - daily receiving and sharing God's mercy

Prayer - accessing the power of God's Spirit for the church

Worship - seeking God with honesty and passion

Integrity - servant leaders accountable to God and the church

Our desire is that we don't just aspire to attain these, but that it is obvious we are a church with a reputation for these values at work now, while still in the process of improvement.

How about you? If someone asked what you value, what would you say? More importantly, what values would your life reveal through your actions to those who are watching?

PRAYER:

God and Father, You are holy and perfect. You sent Jesus to us to be an example of how You intended us to live. May the values we display and live out everyday glorify You, and display consistency to the world who is watching. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Target - Reaching families who are turning to the Lord

What is family in today's world? We can't think of it as only parents, children, aunts, uncles, and grandparents all in a tight group supporting each other. We need to look at things as they are in the real world. There are single moms raising children, single dads on their own with kids, and grandparents raising the children of their children. There is the young adult who has no one in their life except for those people who are leading them down the wrong path. What do we do as a church?

In Acts 15, Peter stood up before the Elders of the church to speak about how hard or difficult it should be for people who had lived a different kind of life to enter the Kingdom of God. The Jews wanted Gentiles to obey the Old Testament law of Moses before they could enter.

Peter said, *"We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are. It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God"* (Acts 15:11, 19).

So as a church, let us remember that everyone is welcome in the house of the Lord. We need to remove barriers for those with different backgrounds; those who have a different definition of family. As they turn to the Lord and His will for their lives, it will be by grace they are saved, just like us.

PRAYER:

Lord, lead us to these families so we can show them love as You would, without putting undue burdens on them. Let Your love and grace show, through us, what can happen in the lives of people if they trust in You and not in this world. We ask this in the name of Jesus, amen.

Our Niche - Living Creek is the simple church where differences stop at the door.

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

We surveyed some people a few years ago to ask them, how would you describe Living Creek in one or two sentences. Our niche statement listed above emerged out of that discussion.

One of the things which divides Christianity is how we worship. There are divisions over the order of worship, man-made traditions, the style of worship, and even how we dress for worship.

At Living Creek, we seek to keep things as simple as possible, shaken down to the main parts of worship without making it complicated, confusing, or divisive. That simple church idea seems to be attractive not only to people already attending, but it is what most attracts the non-churched to worship and seek God today.

Living Creek is called to be a special family made up of diverse people. We need to continue to be a place where people from all backgrounds and circumstances can come together and be united as children of God. Although someone could come into Living Creek and begin to mentally separate us into groups of people based on any number of factors, we want to drop all of those differences and simply be known as Christians.

Let's pray that our church will be known as a place where ALL are welcome.

PRAYER:

Lord, we thank You that You gave Your son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins. We know that You love all people and that Your grace is meant for all of us. Help us to accept and love all the people that walk in the door and let us be known as a place for everyone to come and encounter Your perfect love and forgiveness. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Open and Closed Doors

Have you ever felt like you were beating your head against a wall? No matter what you try, there is no way of moving forward toward a desired goal. And then, at other times, everything can seem to be falling into place so quickly that you can't even catch a breath. Why is that?

A saying in Latin America may help explain the difference, "When it's not in God's time you can't force it, when it is in God's time you can't stop it!"

We must admit that there are times when God has either closed a door temporarily, or the door is locked permanently. Some of the greatest people of faith in the Bible experienced this. They couldn't win wars unless God was with them. They couldn't interpret dreams unless God revealed them. They couldn't even advance the mission work of the church unless God showed them the open door. But then when God was with them, Look Out! When God opens a door be ready to go through it in faith.

Jesus is the one who opens and closes doors for His people on earth today. One of the prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah to come, in Isaiah 22:22 reads, "*what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*" That same verse is repeated by the risen Lord in the book of Revelation.

As we seek God's will for our lives and for the life of Living Creek, we ask him to go before us in the power of the Holy Spirit, to remove obstacles and barriers, to both close the doors of distractions, and open the doors of opportunity.

PRAYER:

God and Father, You have given authority to Jesus to open and close doors in our future. Make Your will obvious as You close doors. When You do, help us let go of our preconceived ideas that are not in line with Your will. Also, reveal Your will through the open doors. Give us the strength, resources, and faith to step into the opportunities You have for us today, and in our future. In Jesus's name, amen.

Pray for Our Mission

Jesus said, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”* (Mark 16:16).

No borders should exist for the message of forgiveness and hope. Your personal mission field might be in a very focused geographic area, your neighborhood, your school, or your workplace. Yet God calls some to go to specific groups of people with the good news. We call them missionaries. From the beginning, the followers of Christ supported the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth. At Living Creek, 10% of all funds received in the General Fund go to support missions beyond the south suburbs of Chicago. Please pray for these.

American Border Mission - Renulfo Garza, ministering to Hispanic populations in the U.S.A. and in Mexico.

Kuki Mission - Dr. Lunkim leads network of over 500 churches, a seminary, and hospital serving the lowest caste area of India.

Chile Mission - Jack & Janine Swanson serve a church in Santiago and provide residential staff, housing, and camp for children.

Oblong Children's Christian Home - Dave & Kris McCarter are house parents, ministering to troubled teens in Illinois.

Campus House at Indiana State - Adam & Erin Caldwell serve to provide discipleship, evangelism, service opportunities, and worship for students.

IGNITE - Lance Hurley leads staff and church planters to start new churches in the greater Chicagoland area.

IDES - Rick Jett leads a team who provides international emergency relief in the name of Christ after disasters and tragedy strike.

North American Christian Convention - a non-denominational convention providing preaching, resources, and encouragement to churches and leaders.

ICOM - Dave Empson directs this annual conference which coordinates and networks missionaries around the world. The 2019 ICOM will be held in Kansas City, MO.

PRAYER:

Father in Heaven, help us to preach the word where we live and bless those who take the message of Christ where we can not go. In Jesus' name, amen.

Financial Peace

“Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can’t take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction”
(1 Timothy 6:6-9, NLT).

How can it be that in today’s America, there can be so much affluence, so many comforts and abundant resources, yet so much discontent with what we have? There seems to be a constant disconnect between our desires and our needs. The average family is burdened by consumer debt and installment payments on homes and autos. Often, the demands at work are greater, leaving less time with family. Marriages are stressed. And our God grieves for His children.

The apostle Paul understood this well. Once a wealthy and popular man in Jewish power circles, he sacrificed everything to follow Jesus and pursue something much greater and longer lasting—godliness. Paul knew what it was like to have much and he knew what it was like to have little. But he realized that a life of desiring God (godliness) leads to something peaceful—contentment. Paul found that lasting contentment was the feeling that comes from finding satisfaction in Christ and trusting God to meet his daily needs.

PRAYER:

Dear God, there are people all around us who don’t know Jesus and don’t experience the financial peace that comes through Him alone. Help us to be a church that models contentment and teaches that the desire to love and trust God has far greater rewards than earthly wealth and more stuff. Give us ears and eyes to recognize the pain around us. In the name of Jesus, the One who offers real peace, amen.

Hope for Tomorrow and Eternity

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

I was standing on a makeshift stage in the second largest slum in all of Africa. Staring into a sea of hungry, homeless faces, I thought, how can I possibly witness to these people who have nothing when I have so much? And then it hit me.

“Being here today,” I began, “I realize that the country I come from is very poor.” I went on to explain that we have so much in America that we no longer recognize our need for God. I talked about the truth that connects us all no matter where we live or what we have. This world is only temporary. Whatever we suffer or gain here will wash away. We must fix our eyes on our hope for eternity, Jesus.

The moment was bigger than me. God was moving. People cried as they came forward and asked for prayer. Many accepted Christ that very day. Ironically, I had no idea I would be giving a testimony to a crowd on this trip. I thought I was going to provide a water supply.

There are so many needs in this world, but none of them are as important as salvation. And nothing satisfies as greatly as the hope we have in Christ. He conquered sin once and for all. Through Him, we have all we could ever need.

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, You are our One true hope, our One true peace. Let us not only cling to the hope we have in Your salvation, but give us the courage to share that hope with the world. Amen.

To Live is Christ

"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21).

Who is the most courageous person that you know? What does he do to exhibit his courage? How does he stand up for his beliefs? Have you ever wondered if you could be courageous like that?

Paul wrote these challenging words from a very incredible place, prison! His hope that he would not be ashamed of Jesus while he was in prison is inspiring to us all. Some might be discouraged by being in chains, but he saw his circumstances as an opportunity to live out his faith. Could we say the words *"whether by life or by death"* and mean it?

What if we had Paul's boldness? How would our lives change? How would our families change? How would our church change? How would our country change?

Paul knew that living for Christ was his number one priority. We *can* have that same attitude towards our own lives. Let's pray that God would help us put Him first always, with courage to stand up for Him and the conviction to live by His Word.

PRAYER:

Lord, You are the giver of all good things. We pray right now for boldness. We confess that there are times when we haven't stood up for You and shown You with our lives, but we know that You can give us Paul's courage. Help us to live with You as our priority and for us to be able to say *"to live is Christ and to die is gain."* In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Section 4:

Greater Prayer

Pray for Wisdom

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray" (1 Peter 4:7).

Nothing helps us improve our focus more than a sense of urgency. We realize there is no time left for procrastination, excuses, or the passion for lesser priorities. We need that sense of urgency in our pursuit of God's wisdom through prayer for our lives and for our church.

There is an urgency to be ready for the day of Christ's return. Our culture makes it easy and obvious to see how people could be unprepared for the end of time. Some of us are so distracted that we might not recognize that the end is near.

There is an urgency to be focused, to be clear-minded. The text above suggests we can not pray effectively if we don't remove the clutter from the thoughts in our heads.

There is also the urgency to be disciplined, self-controlled. Protecting a place, time, and attitude required for intimacy with God means saying no to some other things in our life, which may seem rewarding but lack the power and potential of truly communing with God in prayer.

As we continue these 40 days we need to find a place of solitude and a time of day when we can seek God's wisdom.

PRAYER:

Father in Heaven, help me to clear my thoughts of distractions that keep me from being focused on You and what You are doing in the world around me. Help me to see Your hand move and prepare the way for me in my schedule, my relationships and my commitments. Provide a time and place for me to detach from the world around me and connect more directly to Your spirit. Reveal Your will and wisdom for me and for Living Creek. In Jesus' name, amen.

Planting Seeds

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path...Some fell on rocky places...Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times” (Mark 4:3-8).

A significant portion of the land Living Creek owns in Monee is rented out to a farmer. Each year he plants seeds to get an annual crop. His yield varies from year to year.

Jesus explains the parable of the sower. In the text above, it is not about farming, but about the Kingdom of God. It is like a field. There is spiritual seed that is sown. The harvest is not annual, but eternal. The produce of the land is represented by the souls of those who have been multiplied into the kingdom.

There has also been spiritual seed planted at the property in Monee. Every dollar given to pay for it was a seed of faith. Every one of the thousands of prayers prayed on the land and for the land were seeds of faith which we planted for a future harvest.

Since purchasing the land several years ago, the economy and growth slowed in the area. In the last year there has been growth in commercial interests and industry. As the Lord of Heaven reigns over all things, He is also Lord of every piece of land in the world, including Living Creek's property.

Currently the property in Monee is for sale. This is another example of planting in faith. We are seeking God for His will. If God provides a buyer to purchase the property, Living Creek would have resources to purchase and buildout a vacant property. This would enable us to have a new home several years earlier and for millions of dollars less than building from the ground up. Let's seek God together about this.

How does God want to use our seeds, our gifts, our prayers, and even our land, and use it to fulfill His purpose for a great harvest? Please continue to pray for God's will to be done with the asset and opportunity of the land in Monee.

PRAYER:

God in Heaven, we invest this day, ourselves, our resources, and our prayers as seeds for a future, abundant harvest for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pray for a New Home

“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah” (Acts 5:42).

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands” Acts 17:24).

The early Christians did not have a church building in any town for over 100 years. You may wonder, how in the world did the local churches meet and accomplish the mission? We are thankful for God's provision of our current locations for meetings: Rich South Auditorium on Sundays, and the Ministry Center and offices on the other days of the week. We have been blessed.

It is true that God doesn't live in church buildings. His people are the temples of the Holy Spirit. But buildings are a great tool for ministries to be effective in the mission of the church.

The Elders at Living Creek continue to pray for guidance considering the next steps for our church. If we stay in our current locations there are some challenges. Our Children's Ministry staff does a great job with the limited space, yet it is not ideal. The ministry of The Well for our teens could use a larger space. Living Creek has limited time and facilities for fellowship activities where we can invite friends and get to know one another outside of Sunday services. There are ministries and events we would like to host, but don't have a large multi-purpose area to do so.

We ask you to join us in asking God for a new home for Living Creek. We envision a place where we can serve and reach the community around us, a place where we could host Sunday services and have multi-purpose space for the congregation.

PRAYER:

God in heaven, before we seek a building where we can worship and serve, we ask You to possess us, live in us as temples of Your Spirit. You have always been a provider for Your children. We ask You to direct us in wisdom according to Your will for the place where Living Creek can bring You the most glory. In the name of Jesus, we pray, amen.

Pray to Reach Children and Youth

"We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power, and the wonders He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

The Barna Research Group surveys demonstrate that American children ages 5 to 13 have a 32% probability of accepting Christ, but youth or teens aged 14 to 18 have only a 4% probability of doing so. Adults age 19 and over have just a 6% probability of becoming Christians. George Barna stated, at a recent conference, that statistically what a person believes on their 13th birthday is what they will believe for their life. Another study confirms that of believers surveyed, 85% of the people state that they accepted Christ between the ages of 4 and 14; 10% replied that they accepted Jesus between age 15 and 30.

These two surveys highlight the importance of children and youth ministries working with parents to help shape the Biblical world view of their children. Our church needs to be a place for families to come and learn more about our faith, about our Savior and create an environment that welcomes and reaches children and youth. Many young people in our area come from broken homes and some teens may even come without their parents. The "we" in verse 4 above is you. All members of this church should participate in the effort at whatever level God determines.

PRAYER:

Lord, we love You and know how You love children. We understand that this church is Your beacon to the families and young people in this community. Please bless us as we step up the effort to reach the children and youth in our neighborhood. Please guide us as we join as a church to reach these young people's hearts for You. We strive to connect the hearts of these children and youth to Your heart. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pray for Growth in Fellowship

At Living Creek, one of our core values is that we are a people of prayer. “Prayer – accessing the power of God’s Spirit on behalf of the Church.” Jesus prayed many times during his ministry. He often withdrew from others, so that He could pray for strength for Himself and His followers.

Jesus said, *“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me”* (John 17:22-23). One of the greatest strengths we have as a church is being united through the love of Christ. One of the ways that we unite is to come together through fellowship. As a church on the move without a physical building, we get to be creative about how we do ministry. The Acts church modeled what we hope Living Creek will embody. Acts 2:42 says, *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers.”* Fellowship comes in many forms. We want to be bold about praying for a permanent ministry location where we can be most effective for the Kingdom!

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the ministry of Living Creek. As we strive to be Godly examples to those around us, we want to be aware of ministries that need our assistance. Lord, open up opportunities to serve, and raise up new people that would be willing to be used by You. Father, we pray for a permanent location where we can be effective for Your Kingdom. We want to reach the lost and love like Jesus. Help Your church to be a living example of You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Pray for Future Staff

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

One of God's gifts to Living Creek are our many great leaders. Some of them serve as members of ministry teams, others serve as ministry leaders, deacons, elders and staff. Our leaders, according to the text above, are all gifts from Jesus Christ. Are you an active part of the ministry of the church? You are not here by accident. Everyone has something to contribute.

When each person is fully living out Christ's purpose for them, the body of Christ, the church, is built up, mature and as strong as possible. Consider your place and purpose in helping to build up the ministry of Living Creek.

There are people yet to join us and who we are yet to meet. Will you join us in asking God to continue to provide the gifts and the leadership we need for the maturing and growth of the congregation?

Some of the people God already is preparing to serve at Living Creek may be someone you will meet today. They may end up leading a ministry or even serving you or your children in the future. We ask God to give us every person we need to be a complete ministry.

PRAYER:

God, we ask You to raise up the future servant leaders to make Living Creek mature and complete. Identify our leaders who will fill positions to serve as staff, interns, leaders of our church and ministries. Help all of us to do our part to take up our cross to serve others the way Jesus modeled for us. In His name we pray, amen.

Pray to Reach the 1%

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"
(Romans 10:14).

It has been said that the church of Jesus Christ is only one generation away from extinction. If one generation should fail to pass on the good news, it could disappear. Now, God isn't going to let that happen. He will use us to prevent it. We are the agents of His plan. The world is perishing and we know how to stop it. We have the cure for all the ills of the earth—Jesus Christ!

The entire south suburbs of Chicago could be saved if every church in the area would reach just 1% of the population within a 10 mile radius of where their church meets. If Living Creek reached just 1%, which seems to only be scratching the service of the need, we would be a church several times larger than we are today. One (1), is the secret number, not because it is the least we can do, but because it all begins with one person sharing their faith with another, one person at a time.

If we had just read a terrific book, we'd tell all our friends about it. If we had just found a great restaurant, we'd tell all our friends about it. But, we've just found the source of eternal joy and hope, and we keep that information to ourselves. How strange and how sad! Let's not let one person miss out on salvation because we were not willing to point them to Jesus.

PRAYER:

Lord, help us to live our lives to glorify You. Help us to show Your love through our actions, to speak Your truth through our words, to show Your path through our steps. Let our lives be a beacon to those around us, an example through which they might come to know You. Father, use Living Creek to reach at least our 1%, in Jesus' name, amen.

Pray to Reach and Reflect the Community

“if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”
(2 Chronicles 7:14).

Name a meaningful relationship where communication only takes place on Sunday morning, or just before a meal. Marriage? Family? Workplace? Not possible. So, how can we ever expect to have a healthy relationship with God without regular conversations?

Our Lord deeply desires a relationship with us, but He wants us to show up and be a part of it.

Pentecost didn't happen while someone was preaching. It happened during a prayer meeting. When the early church wanted to know the mind of God, there was a time of prayer and fasting.

Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, started a church in a community of people as diverse and different as those in the early church at Pentecost. Like the disciples, he knew his greatest strength laid in prayer.

We need to embrace and pray for the community around us. If we here at Living Creek pray in unity, God will move.

As Pastor Cymbala said: “If we call upon the Lord, he has promised in his Word to answer. If we don't call upon the Lord, he has promised nothing—nothing at all. It's as simple as that.”

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, if ever there was a need for revival it is now. Help us to humble ourselves before You. Forgive us for our lack of passion when it comes to seeking Your presence. Transform us into the men and women You want us to be. Holy Spirit, put God's desires for this community into our hearts so that we can serve Him effectively. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pray to be Faithful

"Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30).

The darkest day in history was the day Christ hung on the cross. Today is Good Friday. We remember that event with many different responses.

Some may see today with apathy. What difference did the death of Christ make in the world? Others may respond with sadness of the cruelty of man and the ugliness of our sin that marks this day. One response we can't miss is one of thankfulness.

In the garden, Jesus prayed God would remove this suffering from Him, if possible. But He surrendered to God for His will to be done. Jesus accomplished His mission with faithfulness.

Are you in a place where you are asking God to take some suffering or trial away from you? Ask Him! Sometimes God will deliver and heal immediately. But at other times, His response is His grace is sufficient for our needs. Through enduring the trial, we find our faith has a new resolve to be faithful. One day we can say like Paul, *"I have fought the good fight."* Or we can say, *"It is finished,"* like Christ.

Let Jesus be our ultimate example of faithfulness. And not just faithfulness, but also the example of the reward of future glory!

"let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

PRAYER:

God in Heaven, deliver us from evil. When it is Your will for us to endure trials, help us to be faithful like Christ. Thank You for the hope of eternity and the forgiveness of sins we have through His cross. In Christ's name, amen.

Joy in the Morning!

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:18-19).

Today is Saturday, day 40 of the prayer journal. The day between Good Friday, Christ's death, and Resurrection Sunday. We have the Bible to tell us what happens as we anticipate the greatest miracle of all, Jesus raised from the dead.

If you didn't catch it, read the verse above again. It says that the same power God exerted when He raised Christ from the dead is in us.

Yes, the same power. Imagine the potential in us when we believe in that power. This is the same power Jesus referred to when He told us we could speak to mountains and they would move, if we only had a mustard seed portion of faith.

Now with nothing to fear, we continue to live by faith. Hebrews 11 says without faith we can not please God! Without it, neither will we tap into the power or the resurrection of Jesus.

Consider the words of the song, "Same Power," by Jeremy Camp.

"Greater is He that is living in me, He's conquered our enemy
No power of darkness, No weapon prevails
We stand here in victory

The same power that rose Jesus from the grave
The same power that commands the dead to wake
Lives in us, lives in us
The same power that moves mountains when He speaks
The same power that can calm a raging sea
Lives in us, lives in us
He lives in us, lives in us"

PRAYER:

God in Heaven, thank you for raising Jesus from the dead. We anticipate celebrating this event tomorrow. Help us to tap into the same power that raised Jesus, every day of our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

Day 41, April 21 EASTER SUNDAY

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer"
(Romans 12:12).

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

Okay, so you prayed for 40 days. Now what? Here are your options:

1. You can turn up the heat by praying with greater intensity for our church community, for our nation, missionaries, and the persecuted Christians in the world. Keep a prayer journal and list ways in which you have seen God answer prayers for those around you in powerful ways over time.
2. You can let your prayers grow cold by stopping any regular and systemic way of praying. Only pray when you need God in an emergency.
3. Keep praying, but let the pace and intensity cool off a bit and gradually become lukewarm.

So you get the idea. Hot, cold or something lukewarm in the middle are our options. May God look upon Living Creek as a people who are continually *"faithful in prayer."*

PRAYER:

Father in heaven, find us faithful. Don't let our love and passion for You grow cold. Our world, our communities, our church, our very families and lives desperately need You. Help us to be faithful in prayer. You are our only hope. Let us see You move as a result of the prayers we have prayed in the last 40 days and the prayers we will yet pray in the future. In the mighty name of Jesus we pray, amen.

