



RAISE THE SAILS

Worship and Vision Night

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau
September 2019 • Pastor Dan Chun

Welcome to Worship and Vision Night! Why are we here? We call this evening a Worship and Vision Night because our faith is all about worship. It's also about following God's vision for our lives and for our church.

What is worship, basically? Worship is thanking God for His character, His love, His generosity. In fact, the very essence of God's character is love as shown through His generosity. I've been studying a lot about God's character of generosity and it has changed my life. So I want to pass it on to you before worship.

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them a perfect place to live in. A place called the Garden of Eden here on earth. It was beautiful, pure, clean, lush with trees and vegetation, scenic waterfalls, and lots of tamed animals.

There is an old hymn that goes: "O Beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain." That's Eden!

I often show visitors the wild forest around our church that no one landscaped, designed, or planted. It was all made by God.

Take a look out there next time. There are so many varieties of trees—shower trees, palm trees, hala trees, monkey pod, acacia.

There are even wild pigs (that God made to be intelligent) and mongoose! This all makes me think that our church is in the Garden of Eden!

It all points to a generous God. He didn't give us a barren desert. He gave us the Garden of Eden. He didn't have to. He could have just given us barren lands and ugly mountains.

Hawaii is evidence of an extremely generous God who created the beautiful oceans, the cool trade winds, the majestic Ko'olau mountains here on Oahu, the breathtaking Na Pali Coast on Kauai, the beautiful beaches of Maui, the glorious sunrise at Hale'akala, the seclusion and quiet beauty of Lana'i, and the lofty sea cliffs of Moloka'i, which are the world's highest, according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

He could have given us just a barren desert. But no, He didn't. This all points to a generous God, who created all of that and more for us.

When God offers to take Moses and the Hebrews out of slavery, He wants to take them out of a barren Egyptian desert to what? A land "flowing with milk and honey," meaning a place of abundance.

This all points to a generous God.

When it comes to sin and forgiveness, we think, "Oh, no. God can't be that generous."

But remember the story of the prodigal son, who blows it and sins grievously—rudely asking for his inheritance before his father dies, then spends all his money foolishly, and becomes so poor that he has to eat the food of pigs.

But he comes to his senses and chooses to go back to his father even if it meant being reduced to a slave.

What does the Father say when he sees this horribly rude, ungrateful son? Does he say, "Hey, you ungrateful son, you made your bed you sleep in it, you scrambled your eggs and you can't unscramble them, you were a fool so I am going to cut you out of my life?"

No. The Father runs to his son when he sees his son walking down that dusty road back to home. The father runs with his robes flapping in the wind, embarrassing himself, and he hugs his son and then says one of the most beautiful speeches which shows God's generous forgiveness for us.

The Father tells his servants to bring out the *very best* robe and put it on him and then *give him* a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet and then *kill* the fatted calf, the most juicy calf, the most tasty calf and cook it. Forget the "impossible burgers" and we will throw a huge, huge party because my son has come back!

Again, this shows the way-over-the-top, abundant, excessive, amazing generosity of God and how much He loves us and wants us near to him as a son or daughter. He wants to hanai us.

We discover, as the 10,000 Reasons song says about God:

**You're rich in love
and You're slow to anger
Your name is great
and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
10,000 reasons
for my heart to find
Bless the Lord O my Soul**

And what could be a greater generosity than of God who blesses us by taking the form of a man, coming down to earth and then, in order to show His love for us, in order to break the power of sin in our lives, He

sacrifices His life and suffers and dies for us. There is no greater love. There is no greater generosity than for a man to give up His life for another.

Can we get this in our minds, that it is God's nature to be generous? It is His character. And His generosity to us is way over the top.

When we really understand that, we can't help but fall on our knees to worship Him out of gratitude. We are so grateful that God is so great, so generous in His provision and forgiveness, so abundantly gracious to us.

So in that context of tremendous gratitude and sensitivity to God who is generous and who has generously created and given us the world we live in, let us now stand and read together Psalm 104, which speaks of God's generosity in creating our earth. Then, after the reading, we will respond with a significant time of singing and worship.

Come, Holy Spirit, come and guide our hearts to the greatness and generosity of you! Before we sing, Lord, may we all read these verses of Psalm 104 to You, God, saying together:

Psalm 104:1

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty,

Psalm 104:24

O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures.

Psalm 104:31

May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works—

Psalm 104:32

who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

Psalm 104:33

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

Psalm 104:34

May my meditation be pleasing to Him, for I rejoice in the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord! Amen!

(Time of Worship)

This is one of our two worship and vision nights. We have worshipped in song a loving and generous God. Out of our worship, out of our gratitude, we sit at His feet to ask, "What would you like us to do, Lord? What is your vision for our lives, our church? You have been so generous to us. What would you like us to do?"

This fall, we are raising our sails as our church is about to launch on a new adventure that we feel is directed by our Lord Himself.



It will be a vision journey in which we understand more clearly what He wants for our church.

And yes, it's a generosity journey. As followers of Jesus, we want to live out the same character of a generous God and do what He wants us to do. We want to raise the sails of our church and catch the *wind of the Holy Spirit* and go where He guides us.

Once again, the good ship First Prez is about to launch on another adventure that is critical to the health of our church. It's time for us to raise our sails for a new adventure. To catch the wind of the Holy Spirit and to go and do whatever the Lord asks us. Canoes were made to sail out, not to stay in the safety of a harbor.

First Prez has had a wonderful history. So many loving families like yours have been a part of our journey. It's super important for us to know and remember the context of the history of our adventures with the Lord. It helps us worship Him, who time and time again has helped us and saved us.

Sometimes the kupunas, the elders of a church, need to retell the stories. So, gather around the fireplace and listen to Grandpa—Kahu Dan.

Nearly 200 years ago, in 1820, the first missionaries raised their sails and came to Hawaii. Next year is the bicentennial year of their arrival. It was out of their worship of God, their vision, and their generosity that

these brave people were willing to risk their lives and sail to an unknown land to spread the gospel in Hawaii.

If you read their biographies, you'll see that the missionaries suffered from a long voyage and serious health issues on the ship and throughout their stay. They sacrificed in ministry. It was not easy. And a brave Queen, Keōpū'olani, and her kahuna, Hewahewa, paved the way for the Gospel to be presented.

Three years after the arrival of the first ship, a second ship, called the Thames, arrived with the very first Presbyterian pastors: Charles Samuel Stewart with his wife Harriet, and also a woman named Betsey Stockton. Betsey was born in slavery, but later on became a free African-American missionary, the first ever in US history! Presbyterians making *major* history right off the bat!

The other Presbyterian pastor who came to Hawaii was named William Richards. Don't forget this name. He helped lead Queen Keōpū'olani to Christ and she became the very first baptized Christian in Hawaii. More on him later.

Jump ahead 137 years—all the way to 1959. The Presbyterians came to Hawaii 60 years ago in 1959 to found their first church, which we know today as First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu. Yes, 2019 is our 60th anniversary!

We started as a church plant. So, you see, doing church plants and establishing new campuses

is in our DNA. Dedicated Christians risked time, talent, and treasure to start this community. The founders believed that the winds of the Holy Spirit were blowing them to come here. They raised their sails and God brought them here.

Our church was founded at the YWCA on Richards Street downtown, with pastors Bill Phifer and Philip Lee. Richards Street, by the way—are you ready for this—is named after William Richards, one of the first Presbyterian missionaries who came to Hawaii 200 years ago. Our church was founded on the street named after one of the first Presbyterian missionaries! I just discovered this two months ago. What a coincidence! Or was God doing something with our church?

From that downtown location our church moved, two years later, to a new site on Ke'eaumoku Street in Makiki.

In 1994, I became First Prez's fourth senior pastor, marking my 25th anniversary last August 1. So this year, we are celebrating both the church's 60th anniversary and my 25th anniversary!

And since I'm associated with our church for nearly 40 of the 60 years, it's nice to know that no one can say to me, "that's not how we used to do it." I *know* how we used to do it. I know its tradition. I helped create the tradition!

But I also know when we need to have new wineskins for the new wine and why we need to raise our sails again.

From 300 attenders in 1959, we grew to more than 1300 members today. Actually, in my first year, recorded attendance was as low as 175 people and we only had one service.

In 2006, we decided to leave the Makiki campus because we only had 83 parking spaces there, *if we double parked*. Yet hundreds of new people were coming in double digit percentage growth, like between 19 to 39% growth every two years. We knew if we didn't move, we couldn't receive all the people God was sending.

It was out of worship and a vision to reach more for Christ, and generosity fostered by gratefulness to God, that we were able to raise the needed funds to move.

We didn't want to become a *private club* for members only—having to turn away any new visitors, for we were The Church and a Church that is supposed to receive and welcome all. As one person said, who was doing a case study on us, “So, you moved to a club, to be the church, because if you didn't move to a club, you wouldn't be the church.” Sounds like a rap song.

Since then, to be the Church that God wants us to be, we have raised our sails to raise money not only for ministry operations, but for several things that were highly critical that we believed God was telling us to do:

- to pay off our mortgage,
- to fund leaving our denomination for another so we could own our property,

- to support a new Honolulu downtown campus to again receive all the people God is intending to send to us.

But we have filled our sails in many other ministry ways, other than financial or bricks and mortar, since we have moved to Ko'olau. Generosity and worship and vision come in many forms.

In the last five years more than 800 were baptized or renewed their baptismal vows. That's a crazy number! All praise to Jesus!

More than 1,000 have taken Alpha which has led many to Christ and taught us Evangelism skills. Our surveys show that anywhere from 10-31 percent of Alpha attendees find a new relationship in Jesus Christ. That's amazing!

And hundreds have made a commitment to Christ in Sunday Services.

In terms of Social Justice, hundreds have gone to other countries to serve the poor and with non-profit organizations. Locally, on Do Justice Saturday, hundreds minister and are ministered to. Internationally, our members have traveled to other lands to build things, help people, and provide medical care. We have baptized and taught or fought sex trafficking in countries like eSwatini, Tanzania, Indonesia, the Congo, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, China, Japan, and England.

Did you know that over the years, our members have

volunteered to build five homes for the homeless?

Did you know that through our ministry called Laundry Love, more than 125 of our people who wash the clothes of houseless people every month, have now, after four years, washed (and I am not exaggerating) more than *100 tons* of clothes for 300 to 400 citizens, many of them houseless. A February 2019 survey reported there are 4,000 homeless on Oahu. It means we are building relationships with 400 people, kids and adults, many of them houseless. *And that's just one of our ministries to the houseless.*

By the way, we use the term “houseless” because many consider their tent their home, so they have a home, but they don't have a house. So we use the term houseless.

For another ministry fact, I am told we are the top blood donors as a church in Hawaii.

It is a fact, we have given more to Foodland's Give Aloha campaign than any other nonprofit in the State of Hawaii in the last 20 years.

Hawaii sponsored more children via Compassion International, more than any other state per capita in the USA, other than Colorado, where Compassion is based. First Prez and HIM led the way to make that happen. More than 1,600 kids have been sponsored by First Prez alone.

We have also helped hundreds through divorce recovery and GriefShare. Most of them are not members. We are helping the community.

Our members have significantly joined forces with other ministries like Hawaiian Islands Ministries, which has trained more than 70-thousand people and has had hundreds of our members volunteering, a tremendous impact on more than 400 other churches and more than 40 denominations.

Recently, our church, spearheaded by our Young Adults Ministries, served more than 200 military personnel and their spouses in a marriage seminar.

In 2016, our Christmas Eve service hit a historical high of nearly 3,700 people attending five services, which is a real workout for volunteers.

To be sure, our church has been incredibly generous with our time, talent and treasure. Incredibly generous! Praise God for you.

But now the Lord is asking us to launch out again. We will need to be generous again.

We may say, "What—again?" Jesus said, "to whom much is given, much is required." You are incredibly talented and gifted.

There is a deep, deep, need that we *must* take care of and that is we need to repair and remodel our building and expand our ministries.

Now, repairing and remodeling doesn't sound sexy, but you know, if you have a car and the brakes go out, you have to spend the money to fix it. If your engine breaks down, if your radiator leaks, you must fix it or replace it or else you will be in danger driving.

We believe, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is asking us to move out on another mission, as costly as the early missionaries and as costly as our brothers and sisters sacrificed who founded our church 60 years ago.

The Elders of this church, the Building and Grounds Team, the Finance Team, the Long Range Planning Team, the staff and I believe that God has given us a vision for our church for at least the next two to three years. It's time to raise our sails again.

When it comes to a church, we are all, in a sense, in one large voyaging canoe, like one big Hokule'a. But canoes are *not* built just to stay tied up in a harbor, just as armies are not meant to just march around on base. Canoes are built for travel, for adventure, for mission.

Churches are built for adventure and missions. The Lord is calling us out of our harbor for a new adventure. It will be challenging, maybe scary, and we will all have to sacrifice.

For the Goal is this: over the next two years, or 25 months to be exact, we need to raise an additional \$6.5 million. That is *in addition* to our normal giving for

our budgeted ministry operations over *two years* of \$9 million. That all equals \$15.5 million.

\$ 6.5 million
+ 9.0 million
\$15.5 million

We need everyone to be in on this. We need everyone to give out of a worshipping heart that seeks God's vision for us, which will entail us to be generous as He is generous to us.

Our primary goal is 100% engagement.

We pray that every person at First Prez, 100% of us, will engage in this journey. How? By praying, seeking, and allowing God to take us to the next level in terms of our surrender, our trust, and our generosity. Some of the best things we've done at First Prez are those we've done together. This is a community barn-raising time in which we want everyone to do their part and be generous for God's causes.

Our secondary goal is resourcing the vision through our generosity.

We're asking that all of us make a generosity commitment to Raise the Sails so we can raise \$15.5 million over the next two years from December 1, 2019, to December 31, 2021.

That \$15.5 million may seem so big, but let me break it down for you so you can see the three areas that will be impacted by our generosity.

The first area—**our current ministry operations: \$9 million.**

Our current budget is \$4.5 million a year. This is how we're able to do the ministries we're engaged in and the day-to-day operations of the church. So \$4.5 million, times two years, gives us \$9 million.

The second area that will be impacted by our generosity is **campus repairs and renovations: \$5 million.**

As with any other property, wear and tear on our Ko'olau campus is inevitable. Repairing what's broken and making improvements are part of being good stewards of this beautiful campus that God has entrusted to us. I'll tell you in a moment what some of the big-ticket items are.

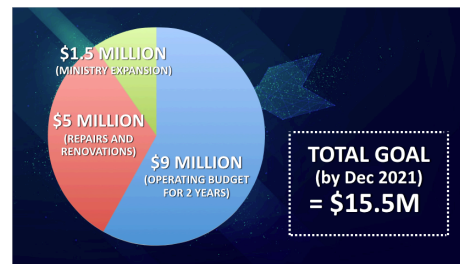
The third area that will be impacted by our generosity is **ministry expansion: \$1.5 million.**

Simultaneously, while we continue to serve others and do the necessary fixes and repairs on our campus, we want to develop and expand the reach of God's Kingdom, locally and around the world. I'll tell you in a moment what the specifics of that are, but right now, I just want to be clear on the amounts needed.

\$9 million for the normal budgeted church ministry operations for two years, plus \$5 million for campus repairs and renovations, plus \$1.5 million for ministry expansion, results in \$15.5 million dollars, which we hope to raise over two years

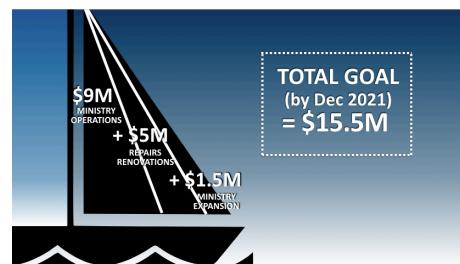
between December 2019 and December 2021.

For those who are into pie charts, here's our vision for the \$15.5 million.



We don't need all that this year, but we do need *pledges* this year that commit that that amount is coming in within the next two years, so we can plan responsibly.

In keeping with our RAISE THE SAILS theme, here is our vision using a sail chart.



So, just to make sure we're all on the same page, tell me the *total* amount we're hoping to raise in two years.

Answer: \$15.5 million

How much of that is the normal, regular operating budget?

Answer: \$9 million

How much extra do we need to give for campus repairs and renovations?

Answer: \$5 million

How much extra do we need to give for ministry expansion?

Answer: \$1.5 million

And this is over how many years?

Answer: Two

Though we will take two years to raise it, we are asking everyone to commit by Sunday, November 10, not only to our normal operating budget for two years, but also to significant additional gifts that all together will total \$15.5 million dollars. We'll start giving this December 2019 and finish our commitments by December 2021.

Our gifts will all go to one fund—for current ministry operations, for campus repairs and renovations, and for future ministries. All going to one fund. Having only one fund is our way of highlighting and saying thank you for your tithes and offerings that all go toward the regular budget of our ongoing ministries and operations. We don't overlook that!

Campaigns usually focus only on the significant additional giving (in this case \$6.5 million) and downplay the weekly sacrificial giving people are making to the ongoing operations. We don't want to do that.

In having one fund, we're saying a "mahalo plenty" for your regular gifts totaling \$9 million—which is incredible—and also for your substantial additional gifts of \$6.5 million that we hope to receive. *Both* are super important!

We want to recognize your generosity with your tithes and offerings because we know it's a huge sacrifice. You keep current ministry operations going and we praise you and thank you for that.

Now, some people may not give at all. So we are saying please start to give now in honor of our Lord.

Some people are tithing, meaning giving 10% of their income already, but now we need additional gifts.

Some people may think, "I'll just take some of the money I want to commit out of my tithe and allocate it as additional gifts." No, that would be robbing Peter to pay Paul. It's all one fund so we all need to give either for the first time or give more in response to God's generosity toward us.

We need everyone to consider giving beyond our regular tithes and offerings so that First Prez is able to not only exist but also thrive and please God by reaching more people for Him.

"Okay," you may be saying. "Okay, Dan. We get the normal budget of \$9 million over two years, but why do we need the extra \$6.5 million?"

Whenever there are big-ticket expenses, our regular annual budget can't handle them. That's true for any church. So here is why we need to raise \$5 Million for campus repairs and renovations:

1. Roof

We know we need to begin repairing the roof. It leaks. It is dangerous when it leaks. Tiles have fallen on Sunday mornings, fortunately before service. Electric lights are up in our ceiling. If we don't begin repairing it soon, there will be more rain damage, not only in the sanctuary, but also damage in our offices and hallways and in the children's ministries area as is already happening.

We have to do this. Our canoe is leaking as we are paddling and we need to stop the leaks. That cost is **\$1 million**.

2. Sewer System

The City & County says we must replace our sewer system *within* 6 months or be fined. It's a system that is used to process kitchen and sanitary waste. We have three bids out there and they average nearly one million dollars.

We literally have to clean up the crud on our property. Not to clean it up means, literally, we have a crappy campus. So cost to take care of the sewer problem is \$1 million.

3. Parking lot

The repaving and repair of the parking lot will cost about **\$1 million**.

4. Elevators

There are three elevators that need to be replaced. That cost is **\$500,000**.

5. Fellowship Hall

Our Fellowship Hall still doesn't have the lights, video and sound system we need. During the day in funerals, receptions, and seminars you can't see people's faces and speakers are just silhouettes. That's **\$100,000**.

So those are some of the big-ticket items, but there are a lot of other projects that add up to **\$1.4 million** over the next five years, like the air conditioning chiller, lanai tiles, water tank.

Know that our Building and Grounds Team and staff have a detailed excel sheet showing the needed repairs and time urgency of each over the years, and all of these things will total \$5 million that need to be repaired within the next 5 years.

This is a building that we have not fully repaired since we bought it 13 years ago in 2006. Our building was constructed 27 years ago, in 1992, and has many major systems that need maintenance, repair, replacement, and improvements as it approaches 30 years of life. The building needs to be retro-fitted for the 21st century.

Up to now, we have been prudent in wanting to pour any funds we had into paying off the interest-bearing mortgage.

You can say that is a lot of money to pour into buildings, and buildings are not real ministry.

Ah, but I beg to differ.

It's not just physical buildings. It's really Kingdom ministry buildings. We estimate that every week an average of around 2,000 to 3,000 people use our facility. When there are graduations and proms, it's even more.

God, in His divine will, has given us a unique campus that we need to maintain and enhance for years to come.

We sit on 246 acres. We have the possibility of being a great spiritual center of influence. Our land is more than three times the size of the Vatican.

God has given us this 3-acre-under-roof building and a 246-acre campus to be used for His glory in the decades to come. That's a lot of responsibility. This is harder than taking care of the fictional Downton Abbey! But when God gives a people such a large piece of land, we have to be good stewards of it and that means repair and remodeling and refreshing it at times.

The leaders of Notre Dame Cathedral, in Paris, France, chose *not* to put in fire safety measures like a modern fire sprinkler system or fire-resistant walls. They refused to remodel for the 21st century. Hence, when the fire broke out this year there was much damage and a lot of remorse for not making it more modern or giving it needed upkeep.

The French President estimates it will take five years to repair it and they now estimate they will have to spend a minimum of \$581 million—that's

more than a half a billion dollars—that they didn't have to spend, had they done their regular upkeep and modernizing. Bet they wished they put in a sprinkler system or new, modern fire-resistant walls!

Our Ko'olau ship—so to speak, God's ship (or is it an ark?)—is 3 acres under roof so of course the expenses will be high.

Now, some might say this Raise the Sails is just about bricks and mortar. It's not about ministry. I couldn't disagree more. Hear this clearly:

a building enables our ministry.

Fixing a building is every bit as critical in doing ministry as worship, or missions, or children's ministries.

We *never* say national defense is just a marine or soldier or coast guardsman or sailor or airman at the front lines. It's also running the bases, the chow halls, and the training establishments that equip them for facing the ultimate sacrifice.

Ask Mark Peleholani, who is one of our great leaders and works for the Hawaii Air National Guard. He would say that without the maintenance of a hanger or a jet fighter plane or a safe runway, the pilots cannot take off and do their mission. Maintenance and updating are crucial.

The building houses our youth ministry, worship, Divorce Care, GriefShare. It's the primary base for much of our discipleship training from which we send out.

Finally, the last part of the \$15.5 million is to raise more for new mission and ministry. That figure for the next two years is \$1.5 million.

What will it be used for? For one, we hope to start an internship program for those just coming out of college or in college. We want to proactively begin training the leaders of the next generation. We are looking at various models around the world. Remember, Jesus began his discipleship with young adults as disciples.

Second, for adults who are in the work place, we want to initiate a Faith-At-Work Leadership Institute for marketplace leaders. How do we really integrate our faith with our work and where we see our work as ministry. The best evangelists in the community are not pastors, but lay people. Lay people speak the language to lay people. They are the best communicators of the Gospel for they are in the offices and neighborhoods. Hence, we want to disciple our members in a marketplace ministry. Tim Shaw has been looking at faith-at-work models in London and New York City and we hope to figure out a blended strategy for Hawaii.

Third, as our church grows in the next 5 years, we may need to hire more staff to help equip our people to serve the community.

And fourth, other ministry projects as the Holy Spirit leads. There may be a project we want to invest in that would do major kingdom work in this country or in another.

And of course there is The Vine, which is actually part of the operating budget. Through The Vine campus, we hope to reach more unchurched, more young people, have an additional base for youth, and a new area for local mission, including Just Show Up, Alpha, Divorce Care, GriefShare in Kaka'ako.

So, starting in the Fall, we will be launching a Raise the Sails generosity journey that will, hopefully forever, be part of our Christian nature. We are really going to be studying the generosity of God for if we know how generous He really is, we will have less worry and less anxiety.

I also am asking that all of us—the entire church—be in a small group for six weeks where we will all be studying the same curriculum from the Book of Joshua, designed by our own staff with videos on how God is so generous that we can—as it says in the first chapter—be strong and courageous when we face any challenge.

The Raise the Sails small groups will run from the week of October 6 through the week of November 10. We have done an all-church Bible study in small groups before and we got a high majority of the church all studying together.

Another important thing to know is that, after you seek the Lord and prayerfully ask Him how much you ought to give for the next two years, know that on November 10, we will ask you and the entire congregation to turn in your commitment card—which we will give you in the next few weeks.

Remember now, that the amount you commit will include your tithes for current ministry operations for two years, and your additional substantial gifts for critical campus repairs and for ministry expansion.

Also now—and this is important—besides God, only the bookkeeper will know what your commitment will be. It will be confidential. For the last 25 years as Pastor, I have never been told what people give at our church, unless the donor wants me to know. It is just between you and the Lord.

I want to say, as we go on this generosity journey, it is more important to know what kind of heart we are giving *from* than the project we are giving *to*. This whole journey is about our hearts, not so much the projects I mentioned. It is more important from what kind of heart we are giving than to what projects we are giving. That is what Raise the Sails is all about.

You can say, "It's just about raising money." No, it's about discipling our hearts to recognize the generosity of God and, in turn, to be supernaturally generous and, in doing so, we keep God as our number one priority and not ourselves. Even if we buy a car or pay tuition or buy a condo, or are in retirement, God is still the number one priority in our lives with our first gifts. He gets our first fruits, not our last.

So we will learn together on this. It will be so great to have all of us in the same voyaging canoe, paddling together, then Raising the Sails—all of us in

small groups this Fall, studying the same thing. There will be small groups during each Sunday service, on week nights, and on weekends.

I want to close saying this. I just came back from a Compassion International Global Summit meeting in Colorado.

All the country directors flew in from 40 countries—only the second time in their history that they have done this. All the top executive staff of each country were there too. It was vision time for about 575 in attendance. Many major donors were there and Board Directors. And they also invited ten pastors. I was fortunate to be invited and, on the opening day, I got to pray for all of the staff in the opening general session.

As we looked at the huge, daunting need to release one billion children from poverty, it rekindled the fires of our commitment.

No one said, "That's too big. We can't do enough or give enough, so I'm outta here." No. People became more excited and passionate.

You didn't hear a staff person say, "No, the need is so big, so forget about it."

You didn't hear donors say, "I have given so much regularly and in special appeals, so I quit." No. Prayerfully, all were thinking, "How do we increase our ministry? How can I help more? How can I give more? Is God asking me to do that?"

Compassion is reaching 2 million kids this year. But they also realize that is only .2% of the 1 billion children in poverty in the world. .2%! There is so much more to do! 22,000 kids die every day due to poverty and yet how many don't know Jesus—people who are hurting.

To be honest, there may be some here saying, "I have giving fatigue. I can't give more." And I understand. I hear you. You feel maxed out. God always wants a cheerful giver. So do whatever God tells you to do and be free and be cheerful and not reluctant or feel guilty.

But for this First Prez generosity journey this fall, don't run away from it. Embrace it. Get inside of it. Join it and just see how God is speaking to you today and how generous He has been to us.

I understand that in our constant giving in time, talent, or treasure, we can feel tired. God knows that. The Bible writes about that. Did you know that? For it says in Galatians 6:9:

Galatians 6:9 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Pam and I, at Compassion in Denver this past week, we were taught about this verse. The Bible says it can get tiring doing good; in fact, if you are doing good you *will* be getting tired. Compassion fatigue. We are always doing good against tremendous odds, but don't give up.

We're not dilettantes. We're not people who just dabble in faith and God. The dictionary defines a dilettante as one who cultivates an area of interest with no real commitment or knowledge.

No, for First Prez, Jesus Christ and His ministry is our life. It's our top priority. The bride of Christ is the church.

First Prez is a church that wants to help others in need, to lead them to Jesus Christ, which is the greatest thing we can do, but for this season while we are helping others, we need, practically, to do some repairs and keep the fires of our operation going. And we will all need to be generous for that.

So, yes, come November 10, we need people to commit and be counted to Raise the Sails. And yes, we will all need to *step up* our generosity to make this happen, and *step out* into Christ-like generosity and into worship of a generous God.

May we be truly able to say and mean it, as Matt Redman once wrote to God,

**King of endless worth
No one could express
How much you deserve
Though I'm weak and poor
All I have is Yours**

So for today, right now, here is what we are going to do. All of this means we have to go before the Lord and pray. So right now, we are going to have an intentional time of prayer for Raise the

Sails. May our response to the Gospel be that it compels us to be a more generous people, a more committed people, a more selfless, passionate people who just want to please God and worship Him, not out of guilt or shame, but because we love Him. That we would pray that there would be less of us and more of Him in our lives.

Right now, I want to ask us to do something different. Volunteers and staff will be passing down your row prayers cards and pens. Take a few minutes and write down a short prayer for what you want for this time of Raise the Sails.

Take just a minute now to write some lines for a prayer, and then I am going to ask you to put that prayer on the sails behind me. If you want, you can come up and read your prayer for us all, to encourage us all.

My prayer for Raise the Sails is: _____

Before we finish with a couple more worship songs, for it's all about thanking a generous God, I want to invite you and your friends to:

- the Sermon Series and Small Groups—Sunday, October 6-November 16
- Advance Commitment Sunday—October 27, 5:00-6:30 pm
- Commitment Sunday—November 10, during services

Please pray for these events and engagements over the coming months. Invite your friends to these groups. This is going to be a great chapter in our church's history. Be forward thinking and creative and bold and courageous like those early missionaries who suffered so much in pain and illness and loss of spouses.

And now, we want to give you this gift before you leave. For each of you, we are going to give you a little boat with a sail, with an L.E.D battery votive candle. Battery included! Sparing no expense, which is incredible for a Chinese guy.

It is to remind you that we are about to raise our sails and launch out on a mission for God and to pray for it. Put it on your desk or near your bedside and pray for our church, and pray and pray and pray. Pray for this Movement, for people to know Jesus. Pray, "Lord, please help me save one more. And Lord, help me know what I need to do in Raise the Sails, this Generosity Journey." The votive reminds you that you are to be the light of the world. No one puts a light under a bushel.

So let's all stand together now as Jason leads us in our final songs of worship.

May we all live lives that please a generous God and be ready to Raise our Sails.