

## 2021 Review

“Make sure that when you eat and are satisfied, build pleasant houses and settle in, see your herds and flocks flourish and more and more money comes in, watch your standard of living going up and up—make sure you don’t become so full of yourself and your things that you forget God, your God.” Deuteronomy 8:11-16 The Message

Right before the people of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into “the land flowing with milk and honey,” Moses warned the people to “be careful not to forget the Lord your God when you became prosperous,” and to “Remember that it was God who gave you the power to be successful.” And then he went on to say, “When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the Lord for the good land He has given you.”

One thing that helps me “not forget the Lord” and remember all the ways God has blessed and provided for me, is looking through pictures on my phone from the previous year. When I did so this year, I was reminded of the home renovation we completed, the family trip we took to the mountains, the fun beach days we had and waves we surfed.

I was also reminded of some difficult moments; like struggling with post-concussion symptoms for three months, then getting covid and having brain fog and stomach issues for another three months on top of that. This was not easy, but the Lord brought us through it.

In the church, remembering is not as easy as just looking through old pictures. Although we do have a few good pictures from the year, the better tool for review is looking at the numbers and remembering personal stories.

It’s important to point out that these numbers represent stories of people in Live Oak Church that are being transformed by Jesus Christ, but they don’t tell the whole story! I would love for you to share your story of how God moved in your life last year. Email it to me at [brian@theliveoak.org](mailto:brian@theliveoak.org).

### Sunday Attendance:

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	(Pre-C) 2020	(Post-C) 2020	2021
Average	40	88	119	126	120	140	160	162	187	101	124
Highest	?	111	180	177	115	192	223	216	216	146	166
Lowest	?	64	71	74	84	83	71	108	108	60	79

In February 2022 Live Oak Church will be 10 years old. If this attendance chart was all we had to go on to gauge our success (fruitfulness), we’d be in trouble. It would be time for us to reconsider our approach to ministry. But as I mentioned above, the numbers don’t tell the whole story!

Over the last 10 years we’ve had different groups of people come through Live Oak Church. College students like Caroline Chambers who attended Live Oak during college and then moved back home when she graduated. Twenty-Somethings like Matt Bell who lived in Wilmington as long as he could then found a better job opportunity somewhere else.

Young couples like Sammy and Sydney Brock who we had the privilege to marry and send off to another town. There have been a handful of people that we've been able to help launch into local and global ministry opportunities, like Sam Marsh and Sydney Sellers.

In 2021 we also saw two of our worship leaders, Morgan and Rose, move out of town. Rose is on staff with YoungLife, and Morgan is working in her field of recreation therapy and soon to be married. And don't forget Ashley Wise, who started attending in college, worked at Live Oak for 7 years, married Gabe and then moved to Japan last year! These are just a few of the people and stories that the numbers represent.

Over the next 10 years, I want to see Live Oak Church continue to grow both spiritually and physically. I want to see the people of Live Oak grow spiritually by becoming more like Jesus. I want to see our church community grow physically, reaching more friends, neighbors and coworkers, who are far from God, and introduce them to Jesus Christ, and help them follow Him in their daily lives.

To see this vision become a reality, each of us will have to participate in the work of evangelism, that is, sharing the story of Jesus with people who are looking for more out of life. Who is one person or family you could invite into your church community this year?

#### Finances:

2021 Finances	Total Q1	Total Q2	Total Q3	Total Q4	Total Year
Budget Goal	94,500	94,500	94,500	94,500	378,000
Regular Giving	90,318	94,324	92,705	97,277	374,624
Operating Expenses	84,115	79,479	93,595	83,185	340,374
Generosity Fund	3,818	4,030	3,636	3,425	14,908
Savings Goal (10%)	8,250	8,250	8,250	8,250	33,000
Total Operating Income	-5,865	2,565	-12,776	2,417	<b>-13,658</b>
Total Reserve Income	52,135	63,053	49,758	67,862	<b>67,862</b>
Total Building Income	0	0	10,077	10,798	<b>20,875</b>

As you can see we were a bit shy of meeting our budget goal for the year by \$13,658. But the good news is that our regular giving was more than our regular expenses, which enabled us to save \$19,342.

You might be thinking, "Wait, how did we save money if we were \$13,658 short of meeting our budget goal?" Great question! Our budget goal includes our generosity fund of \$14,908 and a 10% savings goal of \$33,000. To summarize, we were short of our goal but not of our actual spending. This means at the end of the year we had \$67,862 of operating reserve income. And there is more good news, in three months we raised \$20,875 for the building fund on top of regular giving.

My response to this is to thank God for his provision through your consistent generosity towards Live Oak Church! Your generosity shows that you trust God to provide for all your needs and that you believe in the work of the local church. Thank you.

Looking ahead into the new year, we have two big financial goals for Live Oak Church.

*The first goal is to increase our monthly budget from \$31,500 to \$50,000.* This will make it possible to hire the staff team we need to establish Live Oak as a healthy and thriving local church in Wilmington NC. The staff team will include Lead Pastor, Community Pastor, Administrative Assistant and Student Leader.

The second goal is to save money to purchase a church building. We believe now is a good time to pursue this goal because buying a building and eventually paying it off is a better use of resources than renting long term. And we believe this is a strategic move to establish Live Oak's roots in our local community. I recently met with a commercial banker to see what we need to do to prepare to purchase a building. The short answer is that we need to have \$120,000 in operating reserve income and save \$200,000 for a down payment over the next two years.

The leaders of Live Oak Church lead from the principles of faith and wisdom. Faith approaches these goals believing that God "is able, through his mighty work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." Ephesians 3:20 We believe He is able to provide everything that we need through our church body. Wisdom approaches these goals practically, knowing that there is enough money within our church body to increase our monthly budget to \$50,000 and save \$200,000 for a down payment.

Do the math on how much 100 people would have to give to accomplish these financial goals. The real power is when you put faith and wisdom together, when you act on what you believe to be true. If we all did this we would see God do "far more than we could think or ask!"

With that said, "You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." - 2 Corinthians 9:7 Prayerfully consider what you are able and willing to give towards these two goals. I believe we are going to see God provide everything we need to do the work He's called us to. Again, thank you for trusting God and trusting us with your generosity!

#### Local & Global Partnerships:

Jason Mitchell - Vigilant Hope	2,400
Cory Kovanda - Young Life	2,400
Sydney Sellers - AIM India	1,200
John Awasarmal - Pastor in India	2,400
Matt Beacham - Christian Surfers	2,060
Elliot Grudem - Leaders Collective	2,400
Sydni Williams - Global Education Ministries	1,648
Buffy Andrews - This Whole Life Foundation	200

One of the cool things we get to do as a church is partner with people and organizations to see people transformed by Jesus Christ locally and globally. The list above are the people that we had the privilege to support financially last year.

A few of these people decided not to continue serving with their ministry, so our financial support will represent the changes in the new year. Jason Mitchell has stepped down from his role at Vigilant Hope to help his wife run a new restaurant called The Kitchen Sink. Stop by to say hello when you can! Matt Beacham is no longer serving as the East Coast Director for Christian Surfers. He is taking time to focus on his family and explore another career path. Sydney Sellers had to leave India because of the pandemic, and has not been able to return. Since leaving, she has been living in Thailand and teaching English. Sydni Williams has decided to return home from serving as a teacher in Mexico.

This year we are increasing our financial support to \$400 a month for both Cory Kovanda with Young Life and Elliot Grudem with Leader Collective. Cory has done an incredible job leading and growing Young Life in Wilmington NC. Elliot is the founder of Leader Collective, an organization that provides pastoral care for new and existing pastors in the US. If you would like to know more about our local and global partnerships please let us know.



*Ryan Phillips*

## **Baptisms:**

This past Summer we celebrated the Baptism of Ryan Phillips at Wrightsville Beach, followed by a cookout at the park. Celebrating Baptisms is one of the best things we get to do as a church!

Here's part of what Ryan shared in his Baptism story. "Thankfully through my parents' faith and love, I accepted Christ at an early age. To me, the Gospel means living life in Christ. I love goodness, beauty, hope, family, forgiveness, the divine, purity, virtue, holiness, truth, nature, intellect, faith, courage, bravery, strength, compassion, and mercy. I see this when I think of Christ who came from the Father. I witness this in my life as well. The gospel makes sense to me when I have

sinned against another and seek forgiveness in people, and vice versa. The gospel makes sense to me when I have seen radical changes in friends and family, from bad to good. These processes were not overnight but they happened eventually."

Ryan has since moved ...

Baptism is one of the sacraments (sacred practices) that Jesus gave to His church. It's a visible and physical act that represents an invisible and inward reality. Going under the water represents dying Jesus in death and coming out of the water represents being raised to new life with Jesus in resurrection. Baptism is a way to mark the moment when you believed in Jesus for salvation, received new life in Holy Spirit and made a member of the family of God.

If you have not been Baptized and would like to know more about it, please let us know.

## **Child Dedications:**

Richard and Cameron Wall dedicated Harrison.  
Michael and Savannah Dougherty dedicated Eden.  
Gustavo and Mary Catherine Santos dedicated Oliver.

Child dedication at Live Oak Church is an opportunity for Parents to publicly declare their commitment to raise their children in the ways and teachings of Jesus. And the church commits to partner with the parents to help support them in this great responsibility.

If you would like more information about dedicating your child please let us know.

## **In Other News:**

Last Spring, we hired Dave Holt to be the Community Pastor for Live Oak. Dave has already done a great job in this role. One of the highlights is that he started the Wednesday night group event, where over fifty people attended regularly for a meal and group discussion. This group event is an easy way for people to connect with others in the church and grow in their discipleship to Jesus. Great job Dave!

If you have not already met Dave, please make sure to introduce yourself on Sunday morning.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for taking the time to read this end of year review newsletter. We are so thankful for what God did last year, how He blessed, provided for and worked through Live Oak Church. And we are thankful that you are a member of Live Oak and for all the ways you have worked with us to see people transformed by Jesus Christ. Our prayer for the new year is that God would go before us and "establish the work of our hands." Amen.