

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



“Do not be afraid little flock, for the Father
has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.”

Luke 12:32



THE GIFT OF THE KINGDOM

"SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED. SO DON'T BE AFRAID, LITTLE FLOCK. FOR IT GIVES YOUR FATHER GREAT HAPPINESS TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM."

LUKE 12:31-31 (NLT)

In times of scarcity, people are afraid. We fear that we won't have enough for ourselves, let alone other people. Scarcity expands our propensity toward self-protection and shrinks our capacity for generosity.

So imagine how a group of fearful, impoverished people must have felt when they heard Jesus say to them, "Your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom." The Kingdom! Jesus assures them that their heavenly Father doesn't just want to provide for their daily needs, but that he desires to give them the riches and extravagance of the Kingdom of God! And it's free. No strings attached. The abundance of the Kingdom is yours, Jesus says, here for the taking by grace.

This beautiful annual report helps us to reflect back on the previous year and all the many blessings of the Kingdom that God has freely given us by grace. We are grateful for how faithful God has been and how extensively he has used the people and ministries of Third Church. All of this is a rich gift of grace.

Because of this grace, we may look ahead to the coming year not with a sense of scarcity but with deep gratitude. If scarcity produces self-protection, then gratitude creates self-giving! Knowing we possess the Gift of the Kingdom leads us out of fear and into a joyful desire to use our time, talents and treasures for his work in the coming year.

I am excited to be on this journey with you, Third Family. There are exciting plans and developments ahead—please read the coming pages with prayer and anticipation. And above all, do not be afraid! Our Father is pleased to give us the Kingdom.

COREY WIDMER
LEAD PASTOR

STEWARDSHIP FROM EVERY GENERATION

God tells us to share our stories from generation to generation "so that each generation should set its hope anew on God" (Ps. 78:7 NLT). With this in mind, we invited 3 members from different "generations" to share experiences of God's faithfulness and its influence on their trusting desire to tithe. Our hope is that each of us might be encouraged to trust and believe all God's scripture promises for our lives and to experience heart levels of change that result in deeper relationship with God in a day-to-day, personal way. We pray and hope this heart change of deeper trust results first and foremost in glory to God and also in his kingdom come to new people and places.



PATRICK HILTZ

Stewardship on the surface seems easy. Designate my money, designate my time and BAM... my stewarding is accomplished. But how does my heart figure into this equation? It's far too easy for me to reduce stewardship into abstract calculations about my money or time. Jesus says our God is not God of the dead, but of the living. He initiates grace in our deadened hearts and we are made alive in Christ. Life is no longer to be focused on my own desires and comfort. Grace invites us into God's reign on earth. Stewardship isn't about abstractly figuring out how much I can spare. It's about how my life fits in with God's shalom. As Christ's reign brings about flourishing in this broken world I'm reminded that we don't receive life for accumulation, but life for living and giving. I need this reminder constantly.



MIKE & MISSY
MURCHIE

When we look back over the past 17 years of marriage and raising children, we see God's faithfulness in so many ways. From Mike's work at CrossOver to growing our family in unexpected ways, we have repeatedly been amazed by his goodness. As we've experienced his generosity to us, we have learned to hold material things more loosely and to look for ways that we can use what we've been given to bless others. In doing this, we have experienced the joy and freedom that come with giving. There is joy in seeing how God grows his kingdom as we give. There is freedom in knowing that the fruit of our generosity is dependent on God's faithfulness, not our own. We pray that this joy and freedom will spill over into the lives of our children and that they will learn early on that God is faithful to his promises!



LYNN PENDLETON

My grandparents instilled in my parents that everything is a gift from God. Ultimately it all belongs to him and he wants us first to tithe, then express our love and gratitude with further offerings and generosity to others. Though financial resources were not abundant, my parents modeled trust in the Lord for all that we needed, sometimes even the next meal, and I saw God's trustworthiness.

When I was in my late teens, my grandfather asked me to read Psalm 37:25 aloud: "Once I was young, now I am old. Never have I seen the righteous forsaken nor their seed begging bread." Then he said, "Dearie, as my granddaughter, that promise applies to you."

Years later I found myself a single mom with three growing sons, and God showed himself as faithful to me and my boys as to my parents. May every child grow up as I did with the assurance of God's faithfulness.



OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

Looking back in gratitude, humility, and joy. God has indeed been present among us this year, and for that we give thanks and praise.

As with the year before it, 2016 has proved to be a year of growth. More newcomers, more people joining the church, more babies being born, all to the glory of God. We are humbled and excited by this, and rejoice that we get the privilege of being a part of God's great story of redemption.

Third has grown in many ways outside of these numbers as well. With the beginning of the year, and the subsequent wrap-up of our strategic visioning process, we as a church laid out a few goals all guided by a new, short-term focus statement: to reorient around relationships for community, discipleship, and mission. With that at the heart of our church, our gifted ministry leaders and volunteers set out to create new ways of connecting with people, new ways of deepening our relationship with the Lord, and strengthening our commitment to serving others and sharing the Gospel.

While we stay rooted to qualities and values that have defined this church for generations, we also look forward to the ways God is calling us to innovate and grow as we endeavor to make and mature disciples and love our neighbors.



74

NEW COVENANT MEMBERS

This year, we decided to increase our number of Newcomers classes to three per year. We celebrate and receive our new covenant members with great joy! This is a 115% increase of new members from last year.

990+

VISITORS

Our number of newcomers and visitors continues to be strong. It is up to each and every one of us to greet these brothers and sisters with the peace of Christ, as a part of this church family.

734

AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE

Based on the first 6 months of the year, average Sunday morning attendance rose **11%** from 2015. It is right to give our thanks and praise!

NEW MINISTRIES AND WAYS TO CONNECT

In order to grow along with our congregation, we have to find new ways to connect our people with God and with each other. Here is a sampling of the new ministries and events that have done just that over the past year.

01

Welcome Coffee

These monthly welcome coffees acquaint new folks to Third and get them better connected.

02

Women's Morning of Service

The women of Third gathered to roll up their sleeves and serve the local community!

03

Trial Parish Groups

Folks across the city gathered with experimental neighborhood groups to try practicing the Up, In, Out rhythm.

04

Beta Groups

These short-term small groups help new people meet others in an intentional way and find out how they can plug in to the community.

05

Parent Forums

These are organized as another way our family ministry seeks to equip parents as the primary disciplers of their children.

06

Family Ministry Mystery Nights

A new way for families to come together, have fun, and connect with each other.

07

Monthly Women's Coffees

Organized this fall, this coffee gathering allows women to meet in a welcoming, meaningful way.

08

SMILE Ministry

Single Moms In The Lord's Embrace is a monthly opportunity for single moms to be nurtured with a meal together and a message from Scripture.

THE CLOSE OF A CHAPTER AND THE START OF A NEW STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

In January of this year, we closed out the TAG consulting process. We learned a lot during this season and walked away with concrete core values and detailed action plans for the coming months and years for things we need to tackle to better reach Richmond and the world for Jesus Christ.

A new Strategic Planning team formed that was comprised of 5 distinct working groups, each tasked with a specific set of objectives laid out by the TAG process. These teams have organized, planned, researched, and are knee-deep in sorting through recommendations and next steps for the church. This work is exciting and energizing, and we are only just beginning.

5

CORE VALUES

- Biblical faithfulness
- Gospel community
- Intentional discipleship
- Missional orientation
- Catalytic culture

5

WORKING GROUPS

- Communicate our purpose
- Align Staff & Session
- Connect, train, and send God's people
- Modernize our infrastructure
- Love our neighbors



GROWTH IN SMALL PACKAGES

A LOOK AT FAMILY MINISTRY IN 2016

While many churches are shuttering doors, and the number of religiously unaffiliated rises, Third has been blessed with a baby boom.

The numbers of religiously unaffiliated, skeptics, or “nones,” keep rising in America, particularly among those aged 30 and under. Yet God is at work drawing new people and families to Third, many young and with small children. Our classrooms are – literally – overflowing with kids. So we have been busy this year knocking down walls, enlarging classrooms, and finding the support and leadership to shepherd these little ones.

We don't take this growth lightly, because behind these numbers is what really matters: connecting our little ones and students to the story of Jesus through the whole Bible, that Jesus' plan of redemption is woven through both the Old and New Testaments, and that *they* are part of this ongoing story.

We make these connections through a robust Sunday school curriculum, led each week by loving and committed volunteers. We do it through family service projects, and most importantly by encouraging and equipping parents to take the lead as their children's spiritual nurturers. Our investment is not just for ourselves, but it is an investment in the future generations that will grow up rooted in Scripture and with a great love for Jesus and their church family, a love that we hope will then be passed to their children. This is our task as a church family: to take seriously the very great privilege and responsibility of helping to raise up future generations of the church.

So what does that mean for us? We need everyone at Third to see themselves as contributors in helping to disciple the children of this church family. You don't have to have little ones to chip in. Volunteers rock babies in the nursery, teach or assist in a Sunday school class, pray for these children, and worship alongside them in the worship services. Just welcoming a child into the worship service can be a great gift to a family.

Our prayer is that we will continue to grow, and continue to be a welcoming community, especially to the little ones who enter our doors. Then, as they grow, they will come to know Jesus and then pass on that knowledge to the next generation.



18
BABIES
BORN

16
BABIES
BAPTIZED

151
Total volunteers
that help make
VBS happen



251

Kids that attended our
Go for the Gold
2016 VBS

66

Student volunteer
leaders at our
VBS

\$3876

Amount of money
raised for the Anura
School library that
exceeded our
goal

\$9876

Amount of money
raised to help build a
library for the Anura
School in Niger

He decreed statutes for Jacob
and established the law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach their children, so the next
generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell
their children.

Then they would put their trust in
God and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his commands.

PSALM 78:5-7

REORIENT AROUND RELATIONSHIPS FOR COMMUNITY, DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION.



LIFE IN COMMUNITY: START HERE

At the end of the TAG process, we came away with a new focus statement that was to guide all our ministries and strategic objectives for the near future: reorient around relationships for community, discipleship and mission.

And when it comes to wanting to orient around relationships, we *start here*. We start in the men's ministry and women's ministry, in small groups and Beta Groups, in the experimental Parish groups for neighborhoods and family ministry meet-ups.

WHY BETA GROUPS?

In February 2016, we decided to try something new. We saw that it's hard to make the move from being a regular attender to jump into the commitment and accountability of a new small group. So, we started Beta Groups to try to fill that gap.

We invited some experienced small group leaders to host our trial "Beta Groups." These groups are designed to help people new to Third connect with a few other folks and learn about small groups. We intentionally designed them to begin a few weeks after our fall and winter Newcomers classes, as an easy way for our new members to move right into community together.

We designed the curriculum that includes our Up, In, Out discipleship triangle, scripture study, sharing faith stories, learning about spiritual gifts and then finding out ways and opportunities to serve at Third. These groups meet in homes for six weeks, and from there, the group can decide to keep meeting, start other small groups, or plug in somewhere else.

60+

People in
Beta Groups

5

Total
Beta Groups



SMALL GROUP LIFE

As a church, we've built a long legacy of offering fellowship and life in Jesus through small groups. This year is no different. New small groups started this year, and many small groups continued their decades-long history of meeting together for accountability and fellowship.

580+

People in
Small Groups

70

Total Small
Groups (approx.)

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Our women's ministry continues to connect women from Third across ages and neighborhoods through many different opportunities to draw nearer to one another and to God.

Women's Ministry Morning of Service: Seeking to be more involved in serving our communities, the women organized this service opportunity last April. There was a wide spectrum of activities which supported some of our local missions partners such as Pregnancy Resource Center, CrossOver Clinic, and CHAT. We also helped with neighborhood service projects, such as a garden project at Westover Hill Elementary and street clean-up in the Northside, and had one project supporting a ministry that provides shoes for children in Uganda.



MEN'S MINISTRY

It's been another great year of fellowship and discipleship for the men of Third. This year, we're focused on diving deep into what it means to build covenant relationships with one another. We've done this through things like dinners together, fishing trips, our annual conference, and many more gatherings that build fellowship and strong relationships.



STUDENT MINISTRY

We always say that we have a great group of students, and it's true— we always find ourselves with smart, kind, and mature students in this church family. However, this year it seems to be especially true. So true in fact, that Andrea and Rick have decided to start a **Student Leadership Team** this year. As part of this team, the students will learn more about what it means to be a leader and grow in their faith.

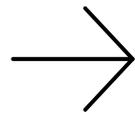
MISSIONS IN 2016

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on 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

\$798,482

TOTAL 2016 FUNDS DEDICATED
TO MISSION



THIS REPRESENTS A

6.1%

INCREASE IN MISSIONS
FUNDING FROM THE
PREVIOUS YEAR



A WELCOME ADDITION

LJ JAWORSKI JOINED THE THIRD FAMILY

For the first time in 8 years, Third is fully staffed, including LJ Jaworski as our missions pastor. We have the great benefit of having LJ lead us more faithfully to pursue the Lord’s kingdom mission.

I was drawn across the country to Third because it is an amazing church filled with people who have a deep love for Richmond and for the world. The financial commitment to mission is sacrificial and commendable. It shows that this church has a heart to make a difference—both financially as well as practically through various volunteer service opportunities.

I loved living in Southern California—who wouldn’t! However, after hearing from the Third leadership, both staff and elders, about their desire to expand and grow our missions throughout the congregation, and my heart for mobilization, I felt it was a great fit. In many churches today, especially those out west, mission budgets are shrinking, and focuses seem to be gravitating inward toward self preservation. It was refreshing to see so many people at Third who have a strong walk with God and are outwardly focused toward others.

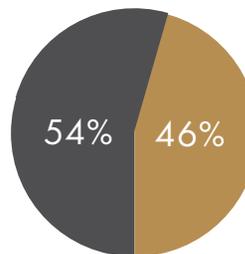
I definitely sensed a call to join the staff at Third and feel still a great sense of excitement for what’s happening now and what is still yet to come!

28%

of the 2016 budget was dedicated to Missions

54% LOCAL OUTREACH FUNDING

46% INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH FUNDING



MISSIONS PARTNERS SUPPORTED IN 2016



COUNTRIES WHERE OUR MISSIONS PARTNERS ARE ACTIVE

TWO INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS TRIPS IN 2016

HAITI

25 Third people
3 big projects: construction, Vacation Bible School, medical services

MEXICO

23 High School students
3 adult leaders
\$2500 raised at the dessert auction

A SNAPSHOT OF WHERE SOME OF OUR MISSIONARIES ARE SERVING:



AS A CHURCH, WE LOVE TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION PARTNERS ACROSS THE GLOBE, BUT OUR 600 FOREST BUILDING IS OUR COMMAND CENTRAL. WE TAKE PART IN KINGDOM WORK FROM OUR BACKYARD.



“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in... Whatever you did for one of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 25:35, 40



76

Backpacks collected for the immigrant and refugee families that the Christian Arabic Church serves.

115

People from Third gathered at a picnic with our brothers and sisters from the Christian Arabic Church to celebrate the end of the backpack drive.



Our church family has given countless hours to our local mission partners—time to tutoring, teaching ESL, and serving through places like CHAT or CrossOver. Here are just a few ways our church family has come together over the past year to love our neighbors. We are so grateful we can take part in the restoration of all things right here in our hometown.

STOP HUNGER NOW

In our 2016 Stop Hunger Now fundraising and meal preparation, we provided:

58,768 POUNDS OF RICE	24,873 POUNDS OF SOY	2,926 POUNDS OF VEGETABLES
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585,244 TOTAL MEALS PROVIDED	\$24,688 TOTAL MONEY RAISED
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ARABIC STUDENT TUTORING

We have been hosting the Arabic Student Tutoring Program for years now, but there has never been more demand for tutors than this year. The Third family has responded though, offering their hearts and their time to serve these students from the Christian Arabic Church.



*me something
of the least of*



LOOKING FORWARD: 2017

As we close the chapter on one year, we anticipate with joyful expectation what the Lord has planned for the year to come. We see throughout this report his faithfulness to us, and we above all are grateful. We know his provision and his hand alone will carry us forward.

MISSIONS IN THE YEAR TO COME

The budget for 2017 is currently a preliminary budget. The proposed budget has been endorsed by Session, but will be formally approved by Session pending the pledge response during Stewardship Season. At that point, copies of the 2017 Budget will be available by contacting the Church Office.

\$131,500

Increase in funds pledged to missions for 2017, compared to the missions budget for 2016

16%

Percentage increase of funds pledged to missions for 2017, compared to 2016

10

Total amount of new mission partners and initiatives pledged funding for 2017

THIS INCREASED SUPPORT INCLUDES (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO):

- **9 new international** mission partners and initiatives
- **Andrew Foster:** one of our own members now committed to church planting and evangelism in Spain
- 4 other missionaries committed to **church planting among unreached people groups** in Japan, Burkina Faso, Jordan, and France
- **Al Massira:** a DVD film series using Old Testament stories of three recognized prophets in Islam aimed at evangelism to Muslim peoples being used with refugees in the Middle East, Europe and other places in the Muslim world
- **Biblical and theological training** for Tunisian and Egyptian pastors from a Muslim background
- **Increased support** for current mission partners to meet pressing needs

MORE TO COME IN 2017:

THE ANTIOCH CHURCH PLANTING RESIDENCY

This year, we'll be pioneering a new program called the Antioch Church Planting Residency Program. This is a special two-year residency program for an church planter to receive training and discern the direction and focus for a new church plant that focuses on cross-cultural ministry. In the third year of the program, the new church would actually be launched.

In the upcoming budget, two different sets of funds are earmarked for this program. One, for the residency costs, and two, for the start-up costs of the church plant. These start-up funds are actually set aside each of the three years leading up to the launch of the church, creating a seed fund for the new congregation.

This is an exciting opportunity to continue our legacy of planting new communities and churches that will further God's kingdom here in Richmond. This project is in line with our fifth strategic objective as well: to find new ways to love our neighbors by reaching out with the Gospel to an increasingly diverse local community.



STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS

The Strategic Planning team is hard at work researching, testing, and convening groups of members and experts to help direct the next steps of our strategic goals. Here's a sampling of a few things that we look forward to learning more about in the year to come as these ideas continue to get fleshed out:

PARISHES: The term *parish* refers to a potential new structure we're researching that would create geographic sub-communities to facilitate relationships, discipleship, care, and mission. Within these parishes, there would be a network of groups that would be an easy place for people to connect, find fellowship, and deepen their relationship with Christ and the community around them.

SESSION STRUCTURE: We're researching how to update the infrastructure of Session so that elders are equipped to shepherd and govern, and staff is tasked with leading tactical work.

IMPACTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD: We're actively seeking how to better partner with our mission partners and the Christian Arabic Church to be a community that truly lives missionally, loving our neighbors and seeking to make disciples of all people.

*“BUT I TRUST IN YOUR UNFAILING LOVE;
MY HEART REJOICES IN YOUR SALVATION.
I WILL SING THE LORD’S PRAISES,
FOR HE HAS BEEN GOOD TO ME.”*

PSALM 13:5-6

THIRD CHURCH
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RICHMOND, VA 23229
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FAITH COMMITMENT SUNDAY

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS?

————— SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6 —————

Our challenge now is to meet the call set before us. We remember God's faithfulness this past year, and the many years before, and we look forward to this next year. Please be in prayer for the Lord's leading as to how you will support Third's ministry in 2017. Our prayer is that each gift—no matter the size—will sustain and increase Third's ministry and mission.

