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Pastoral Letter, January, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are already well into another year. We began the year with a challenge from God's Word:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people (1 Timothy 2:1).

God calls us to pray all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people. As we looked carefully at that verse and the rest of the passage (verses 1-7), we were reminded of the need, responsibility, and great privilege of prayer that is ours in Christ Jesus. We saw that in this passage God is especially concerned that the church pray for the conversion of lost souls.

In recent months, the Lord has been gracious to give us many opportunities to know and reach out to many unbelievers who are without the hope of the gospel. Let us be bold to pray that God would bring them into His church, giving them repentance and faith, and leading them into the resurrection life by the Holy Spirit. Let us be bold to pray for lost family, friends, coworkers, classmates, and neighbors by name. I encourage each of you to write down the names of three or four people that you know and see regularly who are not trusting Christ to save them from their sins; begin to pray daily or almost daily for their salvation and for opportunities to share with them about Christ, and watch what God does.

We were also challenged by that text to learn to pray the Scriptures to God. Since God's Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit and reveals His perfect will, when we pray the Word of God we can be sure that we are praying in the Spirit, and that we are praying for what God desires. Such prayer sees God answer. Let me encourage you to practice this in your personal prayer and devotion times; as you read God's Word, pause and begin to pray that God will work in you and the church the way that He is working in the Scriptures. Pray that God will give you and the church grace to obey the commands you find. Pray that He will fulfil the promises you read in your life and church.

I also want to continue to encourage each of you to come to the prayer meeting. Each congregation has prayer meetings at different times; the English prayer meetings is on Saturday mornings from 9:00-10:30 at Midtown. In the English prayer meetings, we practice letting the Word lead our prayer. I realize that attending every Saturday morning may not be practical for everyone, but start with one Saturday a month, and see if God doesn't use our corporate prayer to encourage and strengthen your faith. We will also try to add more time for corporate prayer at the end of our worship services, and continue to pray together at the end of our Bible studies and TTP, remembering to pray for C4 as we pray for one another.

As I consider the needs of our church, I am more and more convinced that what we are lacking most is consistent, Spirit-led, believing prayer. Let's trust God together to use this amazing gift and privilege to pray that God would work among us to bear eternal fruit for His glory; only then shall we know the fullness of His joy that is promised to us in Christ Jesus.

English Congregation Assembly. In the past we held assemblies from time to time to communicate with the entire congregation. We haven't done that in awhile, but next **Sunday, February 11**, we will assemble together during the TTP/Sunday school hour to communicate with you about some needs and opportunities to serve, and to communicate with you about our ongoing ministries. We will also have time for you to ask questions about the ministry. The assembly is open to all. We will meet in Room 110 (youth room) at 11:15 following the after-service fellowship time.

Scripture Memory and Reading. Participation in our weekly Scripture memory verses seems to be slipping. Let me encourage you to regularly plant God's Word in your heart by memorizing His Word verse by verse. We continue to memorize passages of Scripture slowly, putting them together as we go. As we do this, we read God's Word, meditate on God's Word, and hide it in our hearts so that it may bear fruit. In the coming week, we begin to memorize 1 Peter 2:9-12; why don't you join in! Also, Bible reading plans are available at the Welcome Desk. The Discipleship Journal plan is a one-year plan, and the C4 plan is a two-year plan. Pick up a copy of the one that seems most suited to you and start this week!

Let us pray,

PASTOR HOUSE