Greetings Pleasant Valley Family,

We are excited to share this update with you all of things going on with us and the church plant in Columbia, MO. I’m sure you know all too well some of the struggles the pandemic has brought to all of us. We have done our best to be wise, discerning, sensitive, and safe. We have taken precautions like mask wearing while walking around in our assemblies. We have offered special socially distanced sections, provided hand sanitizers, and used self contained Lord’s Supper implements to name a few. We have been able to meet in person every week this year except for one Sunday when a significant portion of our leaders contracted COVID 19. For the most part everyone had pretty mild symptoms including my mother who was one of our biggest concerns. We have sought to find creative ways to reach out as a result of the pandemic, and we have had some success. God and His Kingdom are moving in powerful ways in spite of the challenges caused by the pandemic.

Our team is growing closer together every day, and we truly have a family atmosphere during our times together. I really believe this is one of the keys to our success as a church planting movement that started in Wentzville, MO with the Crossings Church. I believe it is a mark of all of our church plants. One of the things that I think you would immediately notice if visiting with us is how we love each other. I’m proud of this, as it is what Jesus said would be the key to the world knowing we are His disciples. We also want you all to know that we love the folks that we have been able to meet in the Pleasant Valley family, and we long to spend more time getting to know more of this great family. Please know we think of you all often and pray for you as I know you are praying for us.

This past Sunday we had one of our best attendances of this year, which is our first year as a plant fully launched and established. We had twenty guests, some new, and many repeat guests. Singing is so inspirational and energetic as we are seeing the church really engage in worship together. I’m excited about all of our sermon series that we have done for the year and it seems to really be connecting with our audience. Each year we have a theme that frames all of our sermons and activities for that year. This year our theme is “Less Is More”. This comes from the words of John the Baptist in John chapter 3, where John declares, “Jesus must increase and I must decrease.” We started the year off with a single sermon titled, “Looking Back/Moving Forward”. We wanted to really think about the challenges of 2020 and how God wanted us to learn from it and move forward in a powerful way in 2021. Our first sermon series of the year simply shared the title of our theme, “Less Is More”. In this series we looked at God’s purposes for His church. We wanted to set the pace for who we are going to be as a brand new church plant in Columbia. Then we moved to a series titled, “Under Armor”, in which we unpacked the section in Ephesians 6 that deals with the armor of God. Each week we looked a different piece of the armor that God provides for us to live victoriously for him. We just started a sermon series titled, “Y Tunes”, where we are discussing the importance and meaning behind our singing. As you may know, we do not sing many of the older hymns in our assemblies. This is due, in large part, because we have a much younger crowd. This is of course, as a result, of our major push to evangelize our college campuses and our outreach to teenagers. However, we acknowledge and appreciate the beauty and spiritual depth of the great hymns of old. In this sermon series we are introducing some hymns to the mix of our songs and discussing the meaning of some of the archaic language in hopes to expand the depth of our worship to our great God and our ministry to each other through song. We understand that there are two great purposes in singing. One is to praise and worship our God (vertical relationship), and the other is to speak to, teach, and admonish one another through song (horizontal relationships). This past Sunday we unpacked the great hymn, “Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing” and discussed what in the world it means to “Raise Our Ebenezer”. Please pray for us as we faithfully preach God’s word in hopes to move the hearts of those joining us on Sundays. Also please note that we would love for you to watch our sermons. We have been blessed as of February 28th to be able to purchase the equipment necessary to live stream our services through Facebook. We also have a YouTube channel where the sermons are archived. We pray what we are doing not only blesses those in Columbia, but we pray that we can encourage our Pleasant Valley family and others around the world. Our website, on the other hand, has been a bit of a nightmare to get completed. I will spare you the gory details, but it is still under construction. My goal is to be able to link you all to this as I write regular updates, articles, and post pictures. The idea is that any time I post something new, it will auto generate a report and send to all who are subscribed, ie. Pleasant Valley Missions Committee. Please bare with us as we get this figured out. In the meantime I will try to give updates in this format.

The Facebook link is [(2) CrossWay Church Columbia | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CrossWayColumbia)

The YouTube link is [(1) CrossWay Church Columbia - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdGHIX5VI6wFFodMrwQJ5PQ)

Whether people are lost and visiting with us or disciples looking for a new church home, we go through a series of bible studies with them that are designed to make new disciples. We never assume people are on the same page with God and the mission He has given us. We currently are in 4 adult (two on one) bible studies. I say two on one because any time we do a bible study we have one disciple leading the study, one disciple taking notes and learning how to lead, and the one we are trying to reach. We are also in studies with 4 college students that we hope will lead to new disciples very soon. As for our teen ministry, it has been tough during this pandemic. Though we have had some really cool things happen on a smaller scale with our teen ministry, it has probably suffered the most from the pandemic. This past week, however, we had a bit of a break through with our teen ministry. As much as my daughter Kayla has been inviting, parents just were not allowing their teens to come to much of anything for fear of COVID 19. This week, however, we had 7 teen guests come. Kayla had been inviting these and many others for many weeks, and we finally saw a good number come to our CrossChat. Kayla just started back to full time- in person school, and the vaccinations are becoming more available. We are hoping this will be the start of a great trend and explosive growth for our teen ministry. All 7 of her guests told Kayla it was great and that they couldn’t wait to come back. Some even showed up this Sunday for our church service. I think it will not be long before we see more studies being set up with some of these teens. Please be in prayer about all of this as we have been faithfully inviting and scattering seed, and we are beginning to see some of that seed take root and grow.

So far this year, in the face of the pandemic, we have been able to study with and baptize three new disciples into Christ. Please pray for our new disciples: Herschel Butler (married adult age 58), Amy Sittser (college student age 19), and Jackson Meyer (teen age 17). We had two baptisms last year before we even officially launched so please pray for those baby disciples as well. They are Drew Cantrell (college student age 19) and Jayson Reyes (college student age 19). These two consider themselves mine and Daniele’s adopted sons. Both had absent fathers and some pretty rough backgrounds, and it has been a delight filling that role of spiritual dad for them. They call me dad and they call my wife momma. All of our baby Christians are going through our, “Baby Believers” book that we wrote for new disciples. It is designed to ground them in some of the scriptures that a new disciple needs as a foundation for growth as new babe in Christ. If you would like a copy of this please just let me know, and I will make it available.

We were recently able to have an in person marriage retreat and brought all of our four congregations together for a wonderful time of strengthening and encouragement. We used DVD material put together by Tony Evans titled, “Kingdom Marriage”. It was well received by all and ended up being even better than we hoped it would be. Though Tony Evans is a Baptist preacher, the core of the material did not drift into doctrinal areas of concern. It was very solid material that we could easily recommend for others to use. We liked it so much that we decided to use Tony’s “Kingdom Man” material for our men’s retreat which we just finished up this weekend. There were about 300 men in attendance and it was a great time of iron sharpening iron among all of our church plants. We were so excited to meet in person for this even, as we had to cancel last year’s men’s retreat due to the pandemic.

Our guy/girl discipleship groups go through books on a regular basis. Our most recent book was “An Authentic Experience” by Corey Trimble. This book was a good reminder of how to create and maintain an inviting personal and church culture, without compromising biblical integrity. In addition to reading books, we also participate in the resources and workshops of the Renew Network on a regular basis. This is a network of church leaders committed to seeing God’s Kingdom advanced through a renewed emphasis on disciple making. Renew was started by leaders among churches of Christ and Christian churches (restoration movement roots) and is a nice resource to have as a church planting effort like ourselves. Like anything we have to use discernment and eat the fish and spit out the bones at times. In other words we take what is good and relevant to our mission, and leave the rest. We want to remain humble and believe we can learn from anyone. We want to constantly push ourselves to always be learning and growing so that we can become more effective in all we do for Jesus.

The people we are meeting and we are reaching out to have a diversity of backgrounds and difficulties. We have folks that we are helping that have struggled with homelessness, self harm, insecurities, homosexuality, drug abuse, sexual abuse, divorce, abortion, witchcraft, Satanic worship, and the list goes on. I share this to say that we are not here in Columbia to attract those that are just looking to church hop because we are the next cool thing. We are here for the hurting and lost! We are CrossWay Church – Where The Problems Of Life Meet The Power Of God. This is not just a tag line for us. It is who we are and who we believe Jesus has called to be His church.

There is so much more I could share, but I believe this is enough for now. In the near future I hope to have our website up so that more frequent updates will be available for you all. We want the Pleasant Valley family to know how much we appreciate your continued support. It is so nice when we receive gifts from you all for our birthdays and just acts of kindness like the recent check you sent as a gift to us. It always brings a smile to our face and joy to our hearts to know we are not in this alone but have the support of a wonderful family of believers like you all. We thank God for your Kingdom mindedness. We love you all and cherish our partnership with the Pleasant Valley family in the work God is doing! We look forward to what this may begin to look like in the future as we find even more ways to connect in a deeper way with you all. Please don’t hesitate to call us, email us, or visit any time. We would love that!

All For Jesus,

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