

January 8/9, 2005

State of the Church

Pastors Bryan Clark, Andy MacFarlane, Dick LeBlanc

(Bryan Clark)

This is State of the Church, where we take a look back and celebrate what God has done and also look forward to where God is leading us. If you are new to Lincoln Berean in this last year, or for whatever reason you don't have one of the campaign brochures, make sure you take one from the ushers at the door when you exit. Read it over so that it will get you up-to-date on what we're doing.

Colossians chapter 1, verses 28 and 29 state:

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

From Paul's words in Colossians we take our **purpose statement**: *to glorify God by seeking to present every person complete in Christ*. Every single word in that purpose statement has been carefully thought through, and I want to highlight three significant words in that statement.

The first is **"to glorify God."** To glorify God means to enhance His reputation. It's very important we understand that the purpose of the church is not man-centered. This isn't about me; this isn't about us. This has to be about God. The goal is that people would not say that Lincoln Berean is a great church—but that people would say that God is a great God. That has got to always be our motive.

The second phrase is **"to present every person complete in Christ."** It's very important that we understand the goal is not to see how many people we can stuff in a building. We're trying to raise up people, train them, make them more like Jesus, so that ultimately people would be complete in Christ. It's a discipleship process. People sometimes ask, "What does that mean to be complete in Christ?" The best answer I can give you is it means to be like Jesus. But that is somewhat of a moving target, because it's relative to your view of who Jesus is. And that continues to grow and change. Ten years ago my understanding of who Jesus is was different than it is today. I hope we're all growing and better understanding Jesus and who He is and what He's done for us. And as that changes, it continues to change my understanding of what it means to be like Him. Therefore, the core of our discipleship is to learn and know Jesus—to understand who He is and what He has done for us.

This whole discipleship strategy for us is simply stated in what we call the **People Loop**. If you're new in the last year, you may see the loop symbol, which is on all of our materials, and you may wonder, *What is that thing?* Basically it is meant to be an illustration or a picture of our strategy. We believe it is the responsibility of every Christian to go out and be a witness for Jesus Christ. As other people are influenced for Christ, they are brought into the life of the church and they are built up and encouraged and disciplined in their faith—so that they can then go out and witness for Christ and reach other people. That process makes what looks like a loop, which we call the People Loop.

Now, there are two primary environments that we think are essential for this discipleship to happen. One is this—the **corporate worship service**—and obviously you have found this service. We consider this to be essential to our growth.

The second environment would be in a small group, which we call a **LifeGroup**. We do not believe that just coming in and attending this service once a week is adequate to become like Jesus. We need a smaller environment where we have encouragement and accountability and we interact and grow with other believers. In your bulletin this morning there is a brochure that gives information about a LifeGroup—what it is and how to get involved. Also you can go to the church website: www.lincolnberean.org and get more information about LifeGroups and how to get connected in one. We would consider them to be essential. The two primary environments are corporate worship and the LifeGroup.

We also have two core classes that we feel are essential. One of those is called **Discovery Class**, which is the first step for a new attender at Lincoln Berean. This is a very large church, and people are sometimes overwhelmed with everything that is offered and find themselves saying, “I don’t know what my next step is.” The next step is the Discovery Class. It’s where you discover us—who we are, what we believe, why we do what we do. It’s also our chance to discover you and to better understand you. So that’s really your critical first step. The class is offered either as an 8-week class or a 1-day Saturday seminar. Periodically through the year at the beginning of the service you will see and hear a video reminder that there is another Discovery Class about to begin. So if you have not taken it, that is your reminder. Second of all, if you have guests or visitors and they want to know, “What is my next step? Where do I go?”—you tell them, “You need to start with the Discovery Class.”

The second core class is what we call the **Connections Class**. This is a class designed to get you connected into service at Lincoln Berean. We do not believe service is something you do after you’re complete in Christ. We believe it is something you do to *become* complete in Christ. I would say service is to our spiritual health what exercise is to our physical health. It is a necessary ingredient. The Connections Class takes a look at you and how God has wired you, what your interests and passions are, and then looks at hundreds of opportunities we have for service in our body and tries to get you connected with the service opportunity that fits who you are. My oldest daughter Ashley happens to serve in City Impact on Tuesday nights. A couple of weeks ago she said, “Dad, that is the highlight of my week.” You need to understand service should be *that*. It should be something you enjoy. It should be something you’re passionate about. It’s not just putting in time. It’s not just trying to fulfill some obligation. It should be fulfilling. It should be meaningful. The Connections Class is our attempt to try and connect you with that type of service opportunity. Periodically through the year at the beginning of the service you will see and hear a video reminder that there is another Connections Class about to begin. That also is an 8-week class or a 1-day Saturday format, whichever fits your schedule better. Two primary environments: the corporate worship service, a LifeGroup. Two core classes: Discovery, Connections. That is the core of our discipleship ministry as we seek to present every person complete in Christ.

One other word I want to talk about in the purpose statement is the word “**every**.” People sometimes ask me, “Do you really think you can reach *every* person for Christ?” And my answer is always the same, “We are sure going to try.” That is the passion, the purpose: we are going to try to reach every person for Christ. There are those that want us to shift this down into neutral and just kind of enjoy the success that we currently have. But as long as there is one person out there who does not know Jesus as Savior, we must go full speed ahead. That is our God-given purpose and we take that very seriously.

Just a year ago we announced a three-year campaign that we entitled, “For This Purpose I Live”—which also comes out of those same verses in Colossians. It was our expression of how seriously we take that word “every” and what we believe God is leading us to do in the next three years to

be consistent in trying to reach every person for Christ. I want to walk you back through those initiatives and give you a progress report as to what God has been doing this past year.

The first thing we talked about was a 22,000 sq. ft. detached youth complex. We're very pleased to be able to say here we are one year later and the youth complex is completed in Phase 1. People have asked, "When will we complete the rest of the building?" The answer is after the auditorium is completed. So this gets us as far as it needs to get us for now. We are absolutely thrilled with how it's turned out; I would say much better than we anticipated. The college ministry began meeting in there the first week of December, and it is just an outstanding facility. The costs came in at \$1,458,000. If you read through the campaign brochure it listed estimated costs (it even says "approximate costs"). This was a little bit more for a couple of reasons. One is the cost of steel just went through the roof. Anyone who's in construction knows that. Second of all, we did make some additions to make this a more useable facility and we're very pleased with those. So the total cost is \$1,458,000. Site development was \$402,000 which we expected and budgeted. It includes the change in the road, the parking, some underground sewer and things that had to be changed to get ready for the auditorium. The total spent was \$1,860,000. Just one year ago, I stood here at the State of the Church and said, "A year from now I need to be able to stand here, have the youth complex completed and have all the bills paid if we're going to move to the next step." Well, I'm very pleased to say that the purpose giving this year has been \$2,063,000. So the youth complex is completed in Phase I, all the bills are paid, all the site development bills are paid, and we're ready to take the next step.

And the next step is a big one. It is a 3,500-seat auditorium. There are three pictures of what the auditorium will look like in the main foyer across from the coffee bar. There are three different levels and you can look at those at your leisure. In the next couple of months we'll have better pictures for you. The cost looks like it is going to come in about \$10 million. Now, this is quite a bit higher than what we talked about a year ago for several reasons. One is because the cost of steel has increased a million dollars and there is just nothing we can do about that. It's estimated that the price of steel is going to do that a couple more times, so we're trying to get in this thing before that happens. Also, we made a couple of additions. We added a little bit of programming space back behind the stage area that we're going to leave unfinished, but it needed to get under this shell. The third thing we did was add a connection with the C-wing. As we looked at the plans and how everything laid out, if the new auditorium did not connect with the C-wing and the lower level of C-wing, traffic flow would have been a disaster. So we added a link that we had to have. Beyond that, when they began to just lay out 3,500 seats they realized the entire shell needed to be a little bit bigger than originally thought, which adds to the cost. So that arrives at the cost of approximately \$10 million.

We want you to understand how we process through these things. We have a business team, which is a team that looks at the business financial matters of the church. There is a brochure in your bulletin which lists the business team members and their credentials. I think it's very important for you to understand this is a group of highly qualified financial and business people that help us make these decisions. This team looked at all of the issues. They went back and looked at past growth patterns, past giving patterns, the other projects we've done, the interest rates, construction costs, the economy—all of that stuff that just so thrills me. And they have charted it and put it together. But these are also men of faith and they understand God's part in all of this, and at the end of the day they voted unanimously that we must move forward full speed ahead with this.

That recommendation then comes to the Official Board. The Board is responsible for ministry and the programming of the church. So we look at: what are our needs; where are we headed? And

then we take the recommendation of the business team and at the end of the day we, too, voted unanimously that we must move full speed ahead on this project.

So that is what we're doing. This May we will break ground on the auditorium and it will take between 18 and 24 months to build. We are hopeful that the additional 11:00 simulcast service will allow us to be able to continue to grow for the next 2 1/2 years until the auditorium is open. I know none of us want those moments when people get to the door and somebody says, "Sorry, we're full." That has happened way too many times in the last year. We must move full speed ahead on this. The youth complex and the auditorium reflect our commitment to reach every person in our **community** for Christ.

One of the things that's been very exciting in this last year has been to see how people of all ages have gotten excited about this and jumped on board for this campaign. The children's ministry has done a wonderful job of casting a vision to the children. These types of campaigns are wonderful opportunities to communicate a value system to children—to help them understand what we live for and what matters to God and why this is important. I thought you might want to hear the story of two children and their commitment to the campaign. **(Video)**

I want to talk for just a minute on the return on investment. Let's imagine that God gave us another 50 years. Just imagine in 50 years how many youth will go through that building and how many lives will be affected. And then those youth go somewhere else and they affect someone else's life... and they affect someone else's life. In 50 years well over hundreds of thousands of lives will be touched. And every single time a life is affected, God will put part of that reward in these children's eternal treasure because of their part in the youth building. There is absolutely no investment that brings that kind of return like God's return.

Last year we talked about launching a north church plant. We introduced Andy MacFarlane as the north church plant pastor. And this past year God has raised up Dick LeBlanc, one of our Staff Directional Team pastors, to be part of that team. We believe God is leading us to hive off several hundred people out of this body in order to plant a church in north Lincoln. I have to say two years ago I could not have imagined such a well-qualified team as God has brought together in Dick and Andy. I'm going to invite them to tell you a little bit about the north church.

(Pastor Andy MacFarlane)

A year ago at this time when Bryan shared this vision, I felt very excited...and I felt very alone. And as I think back on my 25 years or so as a Christian and some of the faith ventures, the first time I began raising support to go to work with Campus Crusade and the first time I took an overseas assignment, I remember thinking at those times, *Okay, God, I really need to know you're in this.* Well, I had that feeling a year ago. One of the ways this past year that God has shown me He is in it is through His provision of people to be involved with the north church. I could mention a number of folks, dynamic people, who are going to get involved with North Pointe Community Church. This morning I'd like to focus on three who are going to give leadership to the ministry.

Perhaps the first area I thought about was children's ministry. Maybe that's because we have two children of our own who have so benefited from the children's ministry here at Lincoln Berean, and I wanted us to be able to replicate that at North Pointe Community Church. As I talked to the staff and pastors who give leadership to our children's ministry, the names they kept mentioning were Rick and Kelly Geiler. As I was to find out, they have proven character. Beyond their character, they have tremendous experience. They started as volunteers working in the Nursery and the Walkers. They moved on to be leaders in our Hasidim ministry. And recently they

piloted the Saturday evening ministry we have for families. Moreover, they have leadership experience. They served for three years on the children's directional team for the ministry here at Berean. So they were some of the first folks I called and we began a conversation. Last spring Rick told me that they had decided they were going to be part of North Pointe and give leadership to our children's ministry. Needless to say, I was thrilled about that.

Well, I guess as soon as you think "children" and you get that in place, the next thing you think about is youth ministry. Who is going to give oversight to that? One Sunday after I had preached I was sitting out at the booth and a young man came up to me and stuck out his hand and said, "Hi, I'm Jared Harms. I'd like to talk to you about the youth ministry." So I set up a lunch and I got hold of Paul Lucks, our Jr. High pastor, and said, "What can you tell me about Jared?" Well, the first thing he told me was that it was a package deal. You get Jared; you get Lindsey, too. They got married last spring. What Paul let me know is that these people have a great passion and a gifting for working with youth. Lindsey has worked with youth for five years—three here at Berean. Jared has worked for seven years in our Jr. High and Sr. High ministry. And I could give you a number of examples about their passion and desire to work with youth. But the one that spoke to me was that when they were students up in Omaha, they would drive back here to be involved in the ministry to our youth. Needless to say, they were a very welcomed addition to our team when Jared told me he felt like God was clearly leading them to give leadership to our youth ministry at North Pointe Community Church.

Perhaps, personally, the piece of the puzzle that most overwhelmed me was the administrative end. Who organizes our greeters and our ushers? Who sets up the business practices in the business office? And who puts our Board together? Well, over the course of the year we began talking and suggesting some ideas. Bryan talked to me about Dick LeBlanc. I thought, *Man, that would be great if Dick and Miriam would join our team.* Sure enough, as you heard last fall, that decision was made, and that was a huge relief. I remember my wife saying to me, "Andy, the only person happier about this decision than you is me"—because she didn't want to see me labor under the burdens of the administrative responsibilities. Dick brings great experience and skill and character to our team. He serves here as pastor of both our administration and our service network. Before that, he was a member of our Board since 1991, and he gave oversight to the development of our C and D wings. So we look forward to having them as a part of our team.

There have been other ways God has shown Himself to be in the midst of this, besides His provision of people. I would like Dick to tell you about a couple more of those ways that we feel like God is showing Himself.

(Dick LeBlanc)

I have to share with you that God has answered exceedingly abundantly in two big areas for North Pointe Community Church. Number one is where we worship and number two is where we office. North Star High School has agreed to rent us space for our worship facility. If you know anything about church plants, typically you end up looking for a school to rent. It's usually an old school and what they have that is ample room is a gymnasium. You carry in metal folding chairs and you set them up and have your service and then you take them down, and it's quite an effort. North Star High School has given us their auditorium with theater padded seats, a new stage, and a sound system that is there, and we have to supplement that only partially. What a joy to be able to start out with that kind of a worship experience! And then as people come in, North Star High School is built in such a way that right inside the front door is a huge atrium area with many, many round tables and chairs already there. So the environment we have here, where we try to get folks around tables and chairs to have coffee and have community and to get to know each other—that already exists and exists in a big way.

Equally important, when we went to North Star to check out the facilities and they took us to their classroom environments, their classrooms come already equipped with what we would usually have to carry in. Usually you carry in all of your audiovisual aids. You're carrying in a VCR and a DVD and PowerPoint and a projector. All those things are there. The projectors are mounted on the ceiling and there's a screen on the wall. And there's a cart in every room with all that other equipment on it. We are so blessed by what God has shown us. It's in a central part of north Lincoln and it has paved parking everywhere. That is a huge thing as we invite many folks to come join us.

As we said, when we were praying about where God would lead for us, at a high school you can only use that on Sundays. The school is used for the rest of the week. Where will we meet with folks? And where will we prepare our bulletins and our classroom material and everything that we need to do as an office? So we prayed, "Lord, it would really be neat if we could find an office close to North Star High School." Well, recently we got a telephone call from Bill Biggs, who is president and owner of LI-COR Corporation. Now if you know LI-COR, their location is at the corner of 48th and Superior. That's just a mile and a half from North Star High School. Bill called and said, "I'd like you and Andy to come over. I have some extra office space and I'd like to see if it would fit." So we went over and there wasn't one, there weren't two, but there were three good-sized offices. He said, "I just want to see if this will work." We were overjoyed because of the space of them. Then he said, "In addition to that, you're going to need a place for folks to sit when they come visit you. So you're going to need a small reception area and a place for a secretary or receptionist to sit. You're going to need a space for a work table and a copier to prepare all your materials." It was a huge room and he said, "How much space do you need? We'll build a wall across here so you can create a private office complex. And see that door right over there? That can be your private entrance. You can come and go as you need without walking through the rest of this group." And he said, "It occurs to me you might need a desk. I've got some extra desks. I'll bring some down and set there for you. And you're going to need some telephone lines and you're going to need an internet line. Those are already strung, so just use ours. Don't worry about trying to bring in that wiring for yourself. You're going to grow, but you can have this for as long as your space fits. There's no time limit, and it's all provided at no cost." God is so good!

(Andy MacFarlane)

You know, as we think about this and we get excited seeing God work, I think it's worthwhile just to think about why. I'd like to share just two conversations I've had over this past year. About a year ago, maybe 11 months ago, we were having a meal with a family in Havelock. They shared with us that because of the location and particularly the neighborhood and the homes around Lincoln Berean, there are certain people who just won't come down to church here. Because of what they see they make certain assumptions and they think, *We don't fit*. That's probably not fair. It's judging a book by its cover. But the fact of the matter is, we want to lower obstacles. We want to lower barriers. And that's why we're planting the church in north Lincoln. We want to make it easy for people to come and to hear God's Word.

Furthermore, about two weeks or a month ago, I was having a conversation with a man. He and his wife live in north Lincoln and they've done a great job of getting to know their neighbors. They had a Christmas open house and they were telling me about their relationships. She said, "Andy, we're going to be able to invite these people to church!" I said, "That is what it's all about"—that people will be able to invite their neighbors and friends comfortably. They can say, "You don't have to go all the way across town. You can just go to North Star High School"—a focal point of north Lincoln.

You know, in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul says, “I’m free if I give up my freedom and I make myself a slave to others.” And at the end of that he says, “I’ve become all things to all men that I might win some.” That’s why we’re going to north Lincoln to plant a church.

(Bryan Clark)

The north church plant reflects our commitment to reach every person in our **city** for Christ. Some have said over the course of the year, “You know, we think you’re crazy. In the middle of a building campaign to hive off several hundred people and plant a church is crazy.” And my response is, “No, it’s just *almost* crazy.” But the reality is, if our vision is just to reach every person in our community for Christ, that’s probably true. But if our commitment is to reach every person in our *city* for Christ, we believe we must plant a church in north Lincoln. And we are absolutely convinced God is in this. There have been just too many answers to prayer. Dick and Andy just mentioned a few. There’s a long list of evidence that God is in this.

Another initiative that we talked about a year ago was the launching of a Christian Leadership College, with the idea of a one-year full-time college experience for those people who believe God is leading them into full-time vocational Christian service. It would include seminary level theological classes, significant practical ministry experience, and a personal one-on-one leadership mentoring program. Well, I’m very pleased to say over this last year the Board has determined that Dr. Michael Vlach will be academic dean of the college, and I have asked Mike to come up here. We’re not going to let Mike speak today; we just don’t know what he might say. But we’re going to let you look at him. Mike has a Ph.D. in systematic theology. A couple years ago Mike and I were having lunch together and I asked him, “Mike, you have this degree in theology; what do you want to do with that?” He said, “Well, really, my passion would be to teach seminary level classes in the local church.” And I said, “Have I got a job for you!” We entered into months and months and months of dialogue and really concluded that Mike is a perfect fit for what we want to do. So the Board interviewed him and we have agreed that Mike will be the academic dean. We plan to launch the college a year from this fall—fall of 2006. So Mike won’t actually be on paid staff until a little over a year from now, but he and his wife Holly are members of Lincoln Berean, and as a volunteer Mike is doing a significant amount of work, preparing the groundwork and planning and working towards that launch date. If you would like to know more about the college you can go to the website. You can get quite a bit of information there. We are just very excited and convinced that Mike is God’s answer to prayer for this college.

The Christian Leadership College reflects our commitment to seek to reach every person in our **region** for Christ. We believe that God has situated Lincoln Berean in such a way that we can make an impact beyond just our community, beyond just our city—that we can make a difference in our region throughout the Midwest. As God sends us people, we can raise up leaders to be church planters, to be pastors, to be leaders of Christian organizations, to be missionaries. This is a way that we can impact and change our region as we seek to present every person complete in Christ.

The last initiative that we talked about is the India church planting. Jeff talked a lot about this in November in the Missions Conference. I just want to highlight a couple of things. It is the goal of the Berean Fellowship of Churches—50 some churches—to identify, train, and fund 300 church planters in India in the next three years. Lincoln Berean’s desire is to take on 100 of those. So far in this first year we have about 40. So we are about 40 percent towards the goal, which is very exciting—that is, identifying, training them, and funding them for church plants in India. Over the last couple of weeks we’ve all seen the news and have been moved by the pictures of the horror in Southeast Asia, India, and the other places. All of us have a response in our heart that we want to do something, but what can you do? What a lot of people do is just throw money at them. But

we're convinced that ultimately the best thing that could be done would be to plant Bible-teaching churches in these communities so these people can be cared for and introduced into a relationship with Jesus—not just for a crisis, but long-term to affect their eternal destination. And that is our commitment.

The India project reflects our commitment to seek to present every person in the **world** complete in Christ. When we say in our purpose statement *every person* that is what we mean. And we're going to try to do that. Every person in our community, every person in our city, every person in our region, and every person in the world. And this is our three-year vision to try to accomplish that.

Let me talk just a minute about the response financially this past year. A year ago we stood here and launched this vision and believed by faith. I even said, "I believe God is in this and I think we will see that in this next year." Over the course of the year, it has been very, very affirming that God is in this. The general giving has gone up 25 percent. That's really the heartbeat of Lincoln Berean. That's the ministry fund for what we do on this campus. The overall giving for all funds is up 60 percent, which is absolutely outstanding. I've actually had calls from other churches across the United States and Christian stewardship organizations asking the question, "What is going on there?" And my answer is, "God is going on here." God is working in the lives of people, and people are responding with significant steps of obedience. Listen to the story of John & DeeAnn. (**Video**)

I've seen that video numerous times, and every time I am stirred by the level of obedience of people like John and DeeAnn. What other emotion is stirred in me is I'm so excited for them. One thing that haunts me is to see people that I know one day will stand before God and realize they have wasted their lives. And I'm committed to do everything in my power to prevent that from happening. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that one day when John and DeeAnn stand before God they are going to know they did the right thing. They're going to know they invested what they have in the things of eternity. And that excites me.

One of the things we talked about last year is what we give to God we don't give away. We just send it ahead. Jesus said, "Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven." We need to understand that what we keep is what we ultimately lose, and what we give to God is what we ultimately keep. They are not giving it away; they're just sending it ahead. If you want to know where the Bible teaches that, you have a couple of options. At the Stewardship Booth is a little book, \$2.50, called *The Treasure Principle*. It's a small, simple book, but I guarantee you it will change your perspective on money and possessions. You can also grab either an audio tape or the transcripts from last year's stewardship series. All of that is free. It will help you understand that the Bible teaches what you give to God you keep, and what you keep for yourself you ultimately will lose.

What are the challenges for the year ahead? Obviously we're taking significant steps of faith. In this next year we will launch the north church and we will begin construction on the auditorium. Last year we talked about a three-year pledge card. We want to talk about that again this morning. Last year the pledges came in at 6.3 million dollars. We'd like to see that moved to 8 million dollars this year. Some of you weren't here last year and now God is stirring your heart and you want to be a part of what He's doing. There are some of you who last year just "weren't there"—you weren't ready. But I trust as you see what God has been doing this past year, you're ready to take a step of faith and to get involved financially in making this happen—in investing in eternity.

There is a pledge card in your bulletin this morning. I'm not expecting you to fill that out and turn it in. It's just so you can look through the card and understand what it is and can begin praying

about what God would have you to do. Many of you have already made pledges and you just need to stay on track with that. There are others of you who have already told me that you took a huge step of faith, trusted God, and God has already in this first year completed your pledge in full. I would just ask you to prayerfully consider what God would have you to do this next year. If God excited you in this last year, I'm guessing He wants to excite you all the more in the next year. I doubt that God wants anybody to stand on the sidelines and watch. So all I'm asking is that you would prayerfully consider what more God might want you to do.

You need to know, as far as these pledge cards go, that these cards are completely confidential. I don't see them. Nobody else sees them, except just the recording secretary in the Finance Office. We also do not track your giving. We will never know if you fulfilled your pledge or not. You will never receive a letter that says, "Hey, you're behind in your pledge." We don't even know that. The purpose for the card is two-fold. For you, it's just a prayerful tool in order to encourage you to go before God and consider what God would have you to give in order to excite you and grow your faith in the next year. For us, the reason we want them back is that we need to have some sense of where we're at as a body as we continue to make big decisions. So from that input back, all we get is a total amount.

In the next two weeks we're going to talk about stewardship and what God has to say about money. You may want to wait until after those two messages and allow those to be a part of God speaking to your heart. We'd like the card back by the end of January—by January 30. So take some time to think about it and pray about it. I trust that no one will choose not to be a part of what promises to be a very exciting year in the life of the church.

The other thing I just want to remind you of is the general fund. It's very important that we keep the general fund strong. That is our ministry fund. That allows us to do what we do here on this campus. We've had a great year this past year; we just need to stay on that track.

Last year I told you as we launched this campaign this isn't just about buildings. This isn't just about raising money. It is about getting people to live for that which lasts forever. It's about getting people to think about not just spending their days, but investing their days to live for what matters—that ultimately when we get to the end of our lives and we stand before God we will know that we lived for what matters. That is our mission. I told you last year and I'll tell you again this year, our mission, our passion for the next two years is to go after everybody who walks through these doors and do everything in our power to convince you to live for what matters. I do not want to see anybody waste their lives. That is the theme of this campaign.

This past October we had a very moving, stirring baptism service. It provided just a glimpse of what God is doing in the lives of people. I want to close the service this morning with allowing you to get a glimpse of what we experienced that night. This will be followed by a closing prayer by Roger Sand, who is the chairman of our Board. As you watch this video, if you have been involved in the church in your giving, if you've been involved in your serving, as you watch you need to know this is what you have been a part of. This is part of the return on your investment. It is also a glimpse into why it is for this purpose that we live. **(Video)**

(Roger Sand)

Join me as we unite our hearts in prayer as we close, thanking God for His faithfulness and committing ourselves to His purposes in the days ahead.

Our Father God, we just thank you that we can call you God. That you've extended your love and your grace to us—that we have a personal relationship with you that is alive and dynamic and that you have an eternal purpose for our lives. A year ago we committed ourselves to a

ministry vision that was far beyond our resources. Today we bow before you and praise you and thank you for the progress in this vision. You have truly blessed us with faithfulness.

We celebrate today that the youth complex is finished in its initial stage and it's a great facility being used for ministry. And we praise you that it's been paid for. We just lift up to you our youth ministry in the days ahead that will impact many lives eternally, which will have an eternal impact on our city, on our country, and even the world.

We celebrate today that the pastoral staff for the North Pointe Church is in place with Andy and Dick and their leadership team. We pray that you would lead this team and give them wisdom, direction, and commitment towards this great purpose. We pray that your Spirit would go before them in the northern part of Lincoln and begin to work in the hearts of people—that many will be receptive to the gospel and that they will add great numbers to their church and be a great influence in our city.

We also celebrate and praise you that you've led Michael Vlach to lead the Christian Leadership College, and we just pray in the days ahead that you'll give him wisdom and direction as he puts together curriculum and all that is needed to bring that to a reality.

We celebrate the progress of the India church project and we pray for those people that are training the leaders. We pray that you'll continue to bring devoted candidates to become pastors. And we pray that you'll protect their churches—that many will grow and be a great light in the land of India.

And Lord, we just celebrate and experience your power at work in our midst—for the testimonies of the changed lives and so many who have made commitments of faith toward your eternal purpose. The vision continues to be huge. But we know you are worthy, and we believe that you are pleased with great steps of faith.

Thank you, Lord, for the great privilege we have of participating in what you're doing in our midst. We pray that you will lead us, your people, to continue to be faithful and committed to your purposes. That you would take our loaves and fishes of commitment and faithfulness and that you would multiply them into something so awesome that all will know that you are the Lord God Almighty. So we pray that you would lead us as your people, as you give us the heart of Christ for the lost, that you would help us to live for eternal purpose.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Study Questions

State of the Church

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What is the purpose statement of LBC?
2. What are the implications of each of the following phrases taken from the purpose statement?
 - “To glorify God...”
 - “...every person”
 - “...complete in Christ.”
3. What is the People Loop? How does this illustrate our ministry at LBC?

Bible Study

1. Read Colossians 1:28-29. What is Paul’s purpose according to this text?
2. What are the marching orders for the Church according to the following texts?
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Acts 1:6-8
 - Philippians 1:12-26
 - Ephesians 3:20-21
 - Revelation 5:1-10; 15:3-4
3. What will be necessary for each of us as followers of Jesus in order to complete the purpose God has given us as His Church?
4. The stated goal of this current Purpose Campaign is to get people to live for that which will last forever. In what way has the study in the Gospel of Mark reminded you what really matters in life?

Is there a particular text in Mark that God has used to affect you in some way?

5. In what way has your LifeGroup impacted your life this year?

What could your LifeGroup do this upcoming year to be more effective?

What role does any LifeGroup have in accomplishing the purpose of LBC?