



# RESTORATION CITY CHURCH

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October 9, 2020

Dear Restoration City Church,

As I write this letter, I am very aware that we are about to mark our sixth anniversary as a local church, which means I am feeling a tremendous sense of gratitude for the grace God has given us over these years. At the same time, this is clearly not what any of us thought year six would have been like at all! Nonetheless, I am really encouraged by everything God is doing through our church and wanted to send you some updates as we start our seventh year of ministry here in the DC area.

During our September congregational meeting, I shared some key pieces of information that describe God's work through our church over the course of the fiscal year we just completed:

- During the first five months of our last fiscal year (October 2019 – February 2020), our Sunday morning attendance increased by an average of 3.86% per month over the previous year. While we are paying attention to various numbers that help us measure online engagement, we have not tracked actual attendance since March, for obvious reasons.
- As you've heard me say, we saw dramatic increases in our small group participation throughout last year. During March, April, and May our small group attendance was up 19.7% from the previous year. Even more encouragingly, our small group numbers in December, January, and February were up even more: 36.5% compared to the previous year.
- By God's grace and through your incredible generosity, we were able to close out our fiscal year with a surplus of \$92,000. This surplus reflects both your generosity and a significant reduction in expenses due to the pandemic.

If light of the above, our elders recommended, and our members approved, a \$582,4000 budget for the coming year. This is the exact same number we used in formulating last year's budget even though we saw total giving of \$591,789 last year. Given the economic uncertainty and the challenges we are facing as a congregation, it seemed prudent to create a more conservative budget than we would have under normal circumstances. At the same time, this budget by no means represents a decision to "play it safe" as a church. We have seen a number of families move out of the DC area and seen others who are not able to continue their giving in the current economic environment. So, we believe this budget represents a desire to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7) and "trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Ps 20:7).

One of the most significant questions we will confront in the coming months is the availability of Gunston Middle School for our Sunday morning gatherings. At this point, we are preparing for the possibility of not being able to return to Gunston until next summer or fall. To be clear, we have not been told that and we are praying for the opportunity to return sooner. But I'm

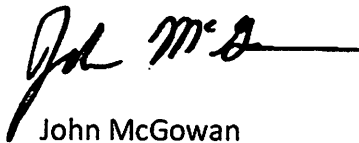
not sure we can reasonably expect to return during this academic year. That means we are working closely with our friends at The Synetic Theater to develop plans that would allow for multiple Sunday worship gatherings as more of us become comfortable with gathering in person and the resumption of some form of RCCKids ministry. Obviously, we will continue offering a livestream of our Sunday gathering whether we are meeting in the Synetic or in Gunston.

In light of the possibility of multiple in-person gatherings and the increased demand of creating online worship experiences, our budget does allow for us to hire a full-time Creative Director/Worship Leader as early as January 1, 2021. While we are very excited about this possibility, I want to acknowledge that hiring in the midst of a pandemic is not an easy decision to make. In fact, the only way to make this move given our current monthly giving is to reinvest roughly 1/3 of last year's surplus to cover our expenses in the coming year. But I believe God is leading us to take this step as a church and I'm looking forward to seeing how He is going to work through our willingness to take this risk. It also means that your continued generosity to Restoration City is incredibly significant in the months to come. If you are currently giving to the work of God through our church, thank you. If you are not yet giving and able to do so, I would ask you to prayerfully consider setting up a recurring donation through our app or website.

As we look to the remaining months of 2020, I want to encourage you to maintain the basic rhythms that nurture our spiritual lives. For us as a church, that means continuing to prioritize our weekly worship gatherings, whether you engage online or join us in person. But we all know that Sunday isn't enough. Jesus restores us in community and we need one another more than ever. So, please, find a way to connect with one of our small groups. It's honestly better to be connected with a group and miss a few meetings than to not be connected at all.

In the coming year, we are going to be holding quarterly congregational meetings to ensure you are receiving regular updates on the life of the church. Our next meeting will be held over Zoom at 8PM on Sunday, December 13. I'm looking forward to that time together but, in the meantime, please reach out if there's any way our team of elders and leaders can serve you. Remember, church isn't an event you attend. It's a community you join. So, please, don't hesitate to reach out if there's any way our community can serve you.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McGowan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John McGowan  
Lead Pastor