

2020 Annual Report

Wednesday June 17th
Wilmington, NC



For Christ

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For Community

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For the City

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A Letter from Pastor Ethan

As a church, we find ourselves in a very unique moment in the history of the world. In the midst of a global pandemic, there is much fear, anxiety and uncertainty swirling around in our culture. Many are worried and concerned about the future. Many are shifting the way things have always been done. Even for the church, we are having to pivot and reengineer the way we do church and think about ministry.

This is new for us, but this is not new for the church across previous generations. For two thousand years, the global church has faced unprecedented circumstances. For two thousand years, the church has faced adversity and affliction. With a quick look at the history of the church, it's clear to see how adversity always advances the gospel. Adversity and affliction is a major aspect of how the kingdom of God is built.

From the very beginning of the early church (see Acts 8), we see it was adversity and affliction through the means of persecution that advanced the church and propelled the gospel around the world. It was affliction that advanced the mission of God. All this reminds us of Jesus' initial promise to his followers regarding the church...

I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

Though we find ourselves in unprecedented circumstances as a church, this is a moment to respond in faith rather than fear. This is a moment to believe that God is going to build his church. By God's grace, the mission and ministry of The Bridge Church throughout this season has exceeded all our expectations. I believe The Bridge Church was built for this moment. Our city and our world is in desperate need of the kingdom of God. Though we will seek an immense level of wisdom in this season, I don't believe this is a time to retreat and tap the breaks on the kingdom of God. I believe this is a time to build.

For Christ, For Community,
For the City,
Pastor Ethan

Celebrating Baptism on Sunday Mornings!

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FOR CHRIST

Celebrating Baptism on Sunday Mornings!

Delain Martin

"I wasn't raised in a church. As a matter of fact, the first time I went to church - at 26 years old - I had to ask the person I was with, what's the difference between God and Jesus. I didn't know much about this at all, but I knew my soul was craving what I had found. The sermon that day was literally written for me by God. I knew He had put me in this place for a purpose. Since that moment, I have devoted my life to Him and His work. I could talk forever about the things God has done in me and around me. But honestly, I do not believe there are words that are worthy of His work and pure love. I have been blessed in ways that I can't describe and you probably wouldn't believe. He has provided for me when I could not provide for myself. He has cured my dad's cancer. He has put me in a small group with strangers that have become family. He has shown me the love I have desperately been searching for. And best of all - His love has

not been earned or an expectant love. It is unconditional, always there, pure love. Therefore, I gracefully strive every day to be more like Him and to show Him to those in my world. It has taken every nerve I have to get up here in this tub today. But I'm here, and I'm ready to do this, for Him. Because I realize that doing this public display is NOTHING compared to the change that he has done inside of me. I have fully surrendered my soul to Jesus and I wake up every morning blessed to know Him."

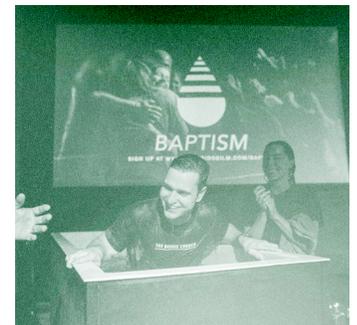
Joe and Kelli Garcia got baptized together one Sunday morning this year. It was a beautiful morning celebrating this couple's new life in Christ and celebrating God's hand over their whole family. Joe shared, "One day my wife dragged me to church, and I only went because I wanted peace in my house. That Sunday at The Bridge, I heard the story of Peter walking on water with Jesus - a story I

33 PEOPLE BAPTIZED THIS YEAR 180 BAPTISMS OVER THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

have heard countless times before. However, I was stricken with the part where Peter sank beneath the waves and cried out "LORD, SAVE ME!" And immediately Jesus reached down and saved him! I thought about all the times I have cried out, "Lord, save me." And I was given more than I asked for, and gotten better than I imagined or deserved, but still did not surrender to his Lordship. But this time, I felt those words grab my heart! I was like Peter, wanting to follow Jesus, but my faith failed - those words convicted me. I realized that I needed to place ALL my trust in Jesus, not myself or my circumstances." Then we had the opportunity to hear Kelli share how God had moved through their whole family, she shared, "I have felt the Lord tug on my heart over the years to make this relationship genuine and he used our eldest daughter. She invited us to worship at Mercy Hill Church in High Point NC, (a church in the same network of churches as

the Bridge). There, I witnessed her joy, love, faith and community - quite frankly, it was contagious. I wanted to have that kind of relationship with Jesus. I found myself hungry to hear her Pastor's sermons every chance I could. Then, we heard about the Bridge Church. Though I had a hard time convincing my husband Joe to come, God answered my prayer that I had jotted down in my prayer journal - and then, He saved my husband.

Immediately, I felt at home, I felt closer to the Lord than ever - and I was able to experience all of it with my husband. Joe's transformation solidified the work that God had been doing in my life. I had witnessed two miracles."



Raising Kids for Christ

One morning in one of our Bridge Kids classrooms after a video lesson, the class had a discussion about how God keeps His promises to us just like he kept his promises to Israel. The leaders were able to have a deep conversation with these kids who were listening intently. As one of our leaders, Frances Coulburn, was finishing up the discussion, she mentioned that God is always there for us and that he always loves us. One little boy opened up to the class and said, "God isn't there for me and no one loves me, not even God." Before Frances could

open her mouth to speak words of comfort to this boy, four of the students immediately started witnessing to the little boy with responses such as, "Yes! He does love you more than anything! He is always there even if you cannot see Him or feel Him! You just need to trust Him! You are special to Jesus!"

Following this conversation, Frances shared with us, "This blessed me and these sweet children were an example to me in their compassion and boldness to proclaim the love that Jesus has for us! Parents, they are listening to you, watching you, and soaking up the love of Jesus through your actions! Be encouraged, you are doing an amazing job with your littles!"

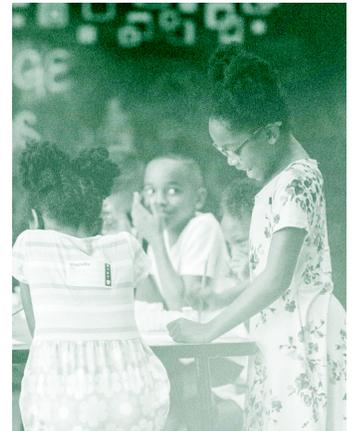
Online Reach: Reaching the City, Nation, World!

The Covid-19 pandemic has been nothing short of world changing, eye opening, and very heavy. Through the heaviness, we are still seeing God move. This pandemic has shown us there is incredible opportunity to reach and impact our culture through the means of online and digital technology. Weekly we have over 1,000 people inter-

acting and watching our Online Worship Experiences in their homes. We aren't celebrating numbers for any reason other than the fact that the gospel is spreading and the good news is reaching the ears of many people. This is something worth celebrating! We have even seen our Sunday Worship Experiences reach many different cit-

The "Go" Challenge

On Sunday, January 26th we launched our 3rd Worship Gathering! This was a huge step for our church body! Never before have we added a 3rd worship gathering for more than just a few weeks. We challenged the congregation to make room at the 9:00am and the 11:00am worship gatherings by moving to the new 4:00pm gathering. Our church body rose to the challenge and on Sunday, January 26th, 224 people showed up at 4:00pm in order to make room for more people to experience Jesus on Sundays. Church, thank you for partnering with us to make room to advance the good news!



Raising Kids for Christ



The "Go" Challenge

ies, states and countries all over the world! We don't believe online technology will ever replace gathering together in person, but we do believe we have an unprecedented opportunity to spread the reach of the gospel through online platforms. We are excited about how God will continue to use the online church to reach the world mov-

ing forward!

An encouraging example of the impact our online reach has had, one young lady shared with us on Youtube, "One massive blessing in this pandemic is that I have been able to worship with you from Massachusetts. I visited your church when I was in NC and now I get to visit every week, blessings."

FOR COMMUNITY

5 Years of Ministry!

This year we celebrated 5 years of ministry at The Bridge Church! We celebrated God's hand, his faithfulness, and his provision over our church! These last 5 years have not been a breeze, but God has been leading and guiding us. The weekend of September 22nd, 2019 we came together for a weekend of celebration! We ate donuts, got new church t-shirts, worshipped, and blessed the Lord together! We are expectant of many more years of ministry and celebrations like this in the future!

**16 NEW
COMMUNITY
GROUPS**
**378 CONNECTED
TO COMMUNITY
GROUPS**



Community Groups

The Kroenke's Story of Multiplication

Tim and Yvonne Kroenke became new Community Group Leaders this year. By God's grace, the Kroenkes launched 2 new groups along with core members out from their community group, eventually they even helped another couple launch a 3rd community group. They also sent out one group member on mission abroad! Each time a community group member was sent out, the loss was difficult. But Tim and Yvonne learned to accept that loss is an aspect of multiplication. As the Kroenkes have led their group, they have walked alongside brothers and sisters in a lot of emotional pain, life changes and hardships. But they also saw progress, witnessed baptism, church mem-



berships, and 2 wedding engagements! God was in the midst of it all! The Kroenke's shared, *"The blessing for our CG this year was that we were a part of each other's story, and God allowed our home to be a safe place for His broken people."*

The Reynolds Story of Faithfulness

During quarantine Bradley and Stephanie Reynolds stepped into a need! The Reynolds had the desire to lead a group and were willing to step into this role but had not launched a group yet.. In prayer and consideration together with the Lord, we launched them as community group leaders during Coronavirus pandemic. They stepped into a need, in God's perfect timing, for people to get connected to community while processing one of the most unique and difficult seasons of most of our lives. Thank you Brad and Stephanie!



Our Family Continues To Grow!

We welcomed 75 new covenant members to our Bridge family this year. If it was not for coronavirus, we were tracking to have over 100 new members just within this fiscal year. With Pastor Chris stepping in as our Pastor of Teaching and Discipleship, we have seen the membership process blossom and grow dramatically over the last year! We are excited for the future of our discipleship processes as we enter into a new year!



On Earth as it is in Heaven

Growing as a Multiethnic Church

For years we have been on a journey to become a multiethnic church in Wilmington. As we grow, we continue to pursue vertical reconciliation with God and horizontal reconciliation with man. This is not a process that happens over night. Along the journey we have had many growing pains and even more than that, growth and healing! Last September we received an email encouraging our church body and leadership to keep doing what we are doing and not skip over horizontal reconciliation...

The emails shares, "I had the priv-

ilege of visiting your church with my daughter. After the service, I remarked to my daughter that the service was probably more like Heaven will be than perhaps any other service that I had ever attended." After attending 10 different churches of all denominations over the span of her life she shared... "Unlike those I had previously attended, there was what appeared to be a very broad range of ethnic, income, & age diversity. And possibly it went further in terms of various demographic categories. But there was a feeling of "oneness", not an appearance of economic class, or racial groups, or any other similar tendency seen all too frequently in the American church. Folks that

were extremely different in terms of outward appearance didn't seem remotely distracted by it, but rather they seemed accepting of any & all that were there to praise God. There was a genuine warmth in the service between the pastor and the people. I wanted to congratulate you on what you & your team have built & encourage the staff & your congregation to continue to step out in boldness. There isn't just one way a church should look... physically or as individuals. But there is just one way it should look in terms of authenticity... and that centers on love. I think you are there... looking forward to visiting again."

Amen, Bridge Church! Let's continue in the fight to grow as a multiethnic church. Let's con-

tinue to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God through the journey! Jesus came to restore all things. "Your kingdom come, your will be done ON EARTH as it is in HEAVEN."

How God is moving hearts through Community and Missions.

A testimony from one of our members, Elizabeth Creath, "When I first became a covenant member of the Bridge Church, I volunteered with Guest Services, because I was terrified, and I mean terrified, of serving in kids ministry. After all, I teach college students, so the idea of working with young children was uncomfortable. But then I went to Haiti with a Bridge Church team in 2018 to serve alongside Haiti Awake, and I fell in love with the Haitian people, especially the children. God used that experience to change my perspective and my heart. A deep desire grew inside of me to impact the next generation in a new way - to teach children about Jesus. So as soon as I got home, I started volunteering in Bridge Kids. And something uncomfortable became a blessing. I receive so much joy on Sundays in Bridge Kids with 3 and 4 year olds. It is an honor to partner with families at our church to share the gospel with their children!"

Seeing the World beyond our own Homes, Families, and Church Walls

God is changing hearts, opening eyes, and encouraging his people through God's word and through community. Earlier this year Pastor Ethan received the following email sharing a very encouraging testimony of how God is continuing to challenge and love his people so personally,

"I've been a Christian since age 6... that's 41 years! Blessed with a rich biblical heritage founded in sound doctrinal teachings. I served in the church from a young age and loved doing it! Around age 30 I hit

a wall of disappointment. Sickness and death of loved ones, family issues, etc, led me to question the way I'd lived my life. I let the devil isolate me and question everything I thought I knew about God. I call this my lost decade. But God didn't give up on me. My job brought me to Wilmington. It was a good opportunity, but required me to leave my family and everything familiar behind. I knew God was leading me to move, so I did. On the advice of a pastor friend in VA, I came to the Bridge. That was 4 years ago. I said all of that to say this... spiritually I

had thrown in the towel. Being at the Bridge has made me want my towel back! Being a part of this ministry has changed me. It's put the fire back in my bones for Jesus. Reignited my desire to serve Him! I want to thank you and the elders for what you do and how you do it. Your teaching on what it looks like to live out my faith in the community is changing me at my core... and I love it! Seeing the world beyond my house, my family, my church walls, is exciting, humbling, convicting, and encouraging. I love our church family and what it stands for."

FOR THE CITY

Faith Initiative FOR THE CITY

On Sunday, December 8th, our entire church participated in a faith commitment where we stepped out in faith. This was a new season where God was calling us to recognize his mission in a new way, not just outside The Bridge Church but inside as well. This faith initiative was a huge moment in the history of our church. We saw so much

radical faith! Through the Faith Initiative we were able to raise \$50,000 dollars to be put right back into our community! We used these funds to partner with local schools, Vigilant Hope, Support the Port, Be the Bridge, Christian Recovery Houses, our Mercy Ministry, and the organizations we partner with through Serve the City! We are so encouraged by the generosity and faith in our church body! We believe as God grows our church, every investment in the church will actually fuel and multiply our ability to impact the mission of God outside of our church.



Deacons Care & Support

Over the last fiscal year our deacon team has done a phenomenal job caring for our church family and our city. The deacon team has helped 75 persons of need this year! We are encouraged how God continues to supply resources and individuals to partner with our city through this ministry. Year after year we are able to serve more people in our city who walk through our front doors each week!

The Beauty of Location and God's Provision

One Sunday afternoon in March, Rick, a volunteer with First Fruit ministries was serving meals to some people in our community who are homeless and giving these friends rides in his van. While driving around town their van ran out of gas right in front of The Bridge Church. They pulled into the parking lot to wait for someone to bring them gas, and while

they waited, Rick bought his friends a cup of coffee. As they waited for their drinks, one of the women walked over to use the restroom at The Bridge. As the young woman returned to PCJ she was carrying a bag and a pair of sunglasses. She had wanted sunglasses all week long but didn't have the money to buy any. The Guest Services team also invited her to church and no one had ever invited her to come to a church before. She planned to attend the next Sunday! A big thank you to our Guest Services ministry for always taking the time to love our city as they enter our doors each Sunday!



Serving the City through a Pandemic

Although we postponed our Serve the City event this past March due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, we have not stopped serving our city and partnering with many different local groups and ministries. We committed to supporting our ministry

partners and helping meet the critical needs of our community during this time. As well, all throughout the pandemic our deacon team has continued to call and meet with those in need in our city who had spiritual or financial needs or were at risk.

Faith Initiative FOR OUR WORLD

Through the Faith Initiative in January, our church faithfully gave over \$100,000 to support our National and International ministry partners. Your generosity allowed our church to financially partner with The Brook Church (Miami, FL), New City Church (Tampa, FL), Redemption Church (Roanoke, VA), North American Missions Board, The Byerly's in Spain, Haiti Awake, and increased current missionary support.

National & International Partnerships

All throughout scripture, we see God's heart to make Himself known among the nations, that ALL people might know Him. We want to continue to be a church that reaches the nations and this year we partnered with ministries in Haiti, Spain, East Asia, and Canada to help reach the nations. As well, we believe church planting is essential and this year we increased our National partnerships by helping fund and partner with the

Mundy Family and Redemption Church in Roanoke, VA. The Go Team is another way we have continued to grow on mission. The GO Team exists to mobilize our church on mission by providing opportunities to engage unreached people groups in our city, care for our missionaries overseas, help recruit for short term mission trips, and host missions-related events within the church. Over the last year, our GO Team has doubled in size and continues to bless our church and our ministry partners by intentionally praying for and being a voice for our partners.



Discipleship Happening in Japan!

One of our Members, Josh Ellsworth was deployed to Japan last summer. Through his time in Japan, Josh started a Bible study with a group of Marines in the barracks. They listened to the sermons online and studied God's word together on a regular basis. He saw God move in people's hearts and had many spiritual conversations throughout his deployment. Meanwhile, over Labor Day weekend, a young lady visited The Bridge

from Raleigh, NC. On that weekend Pastor Ethan shared the encouraging story about God working through Josh's deployment in Japan. God was at work though her visit to The Bridge! This young lady had a Marine friend based in Japan searching for Christian Community and we were able to connect him with the community developing in the barracks! God is in the business of discipleship!

INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL

VISION



God is doing amazing things through the ministry of The Bridge Church, and I believe we have an incredible opportunity in the next fiscal year to build on the foundation God has already established. Specifically, there are 5 areas where I believe we should step out in faith in order to see God build in this season, specifically in the next fiscal year—July 2020 through June 2021.

5 Areas to Build

1—Kingdom Movement
During this fiscal year, I want to see our church continue to build towards a Kingdom Movement. God has blessed us tremendously over the past several years on our journey to join God in his mission to build his kingdom, and I believe we are poised to take the next step as a church to grow in this.

Specifically, I want us to build towards a robust theology and philosophy of the kingdom of God. I want us to build towards a stronger understanding of king-

dom reconciliation—vertical reconciliation with God well as horizontal reconciliation with man. Additionally, I want us to build towards a kingdom understanding of justice and mobilization.

At the beginning of this fall, we will be taking several weeks as a church to enter into a teaching series on the Kingdom of God because we want the entire church to be aligned in this vision. Additionally, there will be long term plans for equipping our church to live this out in a variety of ministry expressions.

2—Discipleship Culture
During this fiscal year, I want to see our church continue to build towards a Discipleship Culture. Our church has always put an emphasis on discipleship, but I believe we are at a stage to rethink and reengineer the way we do discipleship. I believe we are poised to take significant steps this year in growing and making disciples.

We will be working extensively to unfold new strategies and methods to help us create a dis-



ipleship culture. This will impact the way we do community groups, but it will also impact the areas of Men's Discipleship and Women's Discipleship.

3—Ministry Development

During this fiscal year, I want to see our church continue to build towards Ministry Development. I believe we have a great opportunity to build our ministries as a church. As a young church, we need to invest in building our ministries and growing them well. For several of our ministry areas, we will be taking steps to help staff these ministries for strength in order to help them build and grow stronger.

4—Online Reach

During this fiscal year, I want to see our church continue to build towards Online Reach. This pandemic has shown us there is incredible opportunity to reach and impact our culture through the means of online and digital technology. I don't believe the in-person nature of the church will ever be replaced by online technology, but I do believe we have an unprecedented opportunity to spread the reach of the gospel through online platforms. I am excited to take significant steps as we build towards a greater online reach this year.

5—New Facility

During this fiscal year, I want to see our church continue to build towards a New Facility. Our current facility at 2101 Market Street has been a great "starter facility" for the early years of our church, but the facility has also been a liability. For a couple of years now our church has continued to hit the limits of our facility.

Facilities are obviously not the mission. Facilities are tools to help accomplish the mission. A facility should ultimately catalyze the mission, not compromise the mission. Therefore, we will be praying and believing God as we build towards a new facility in this fiscal year.

Additionally, I have no desire to be the biggest church in the city or try to make a name for our church. Rather, I believe God has called us to make a significant impact in the city and significantly influence our city area for the kingdom of God. Therefore, we are asking for God to provide us with a facility that will be utilized for kingdom efforts and really exist to bless our city. We want our facility to be a hub for ministry life and kingdom efforts in our city. I am excited to see how the Lord leads and provides for this great need.



BUDGET

Capital Position

(as of May 31)

Total Liabilities:

\$14,644.99

Ear Marked Accounts:

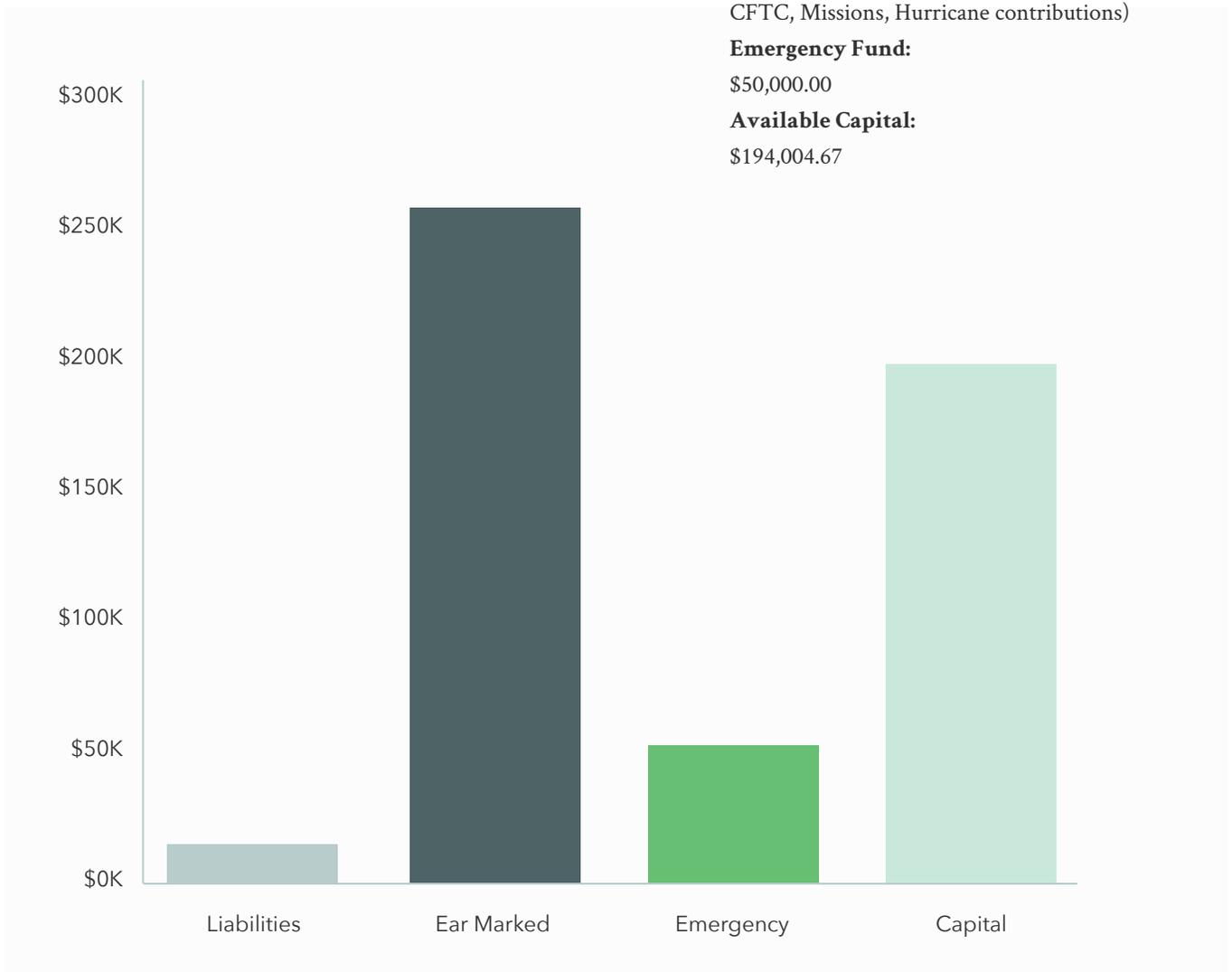
\$252,416.55 (includes preparing for future space, CFTC, Missions, Hurricane contributions)

Emergency Fund:

\$50,000.00

Available Capital:

\$194,004.67



Another Year Self-Sustaining!

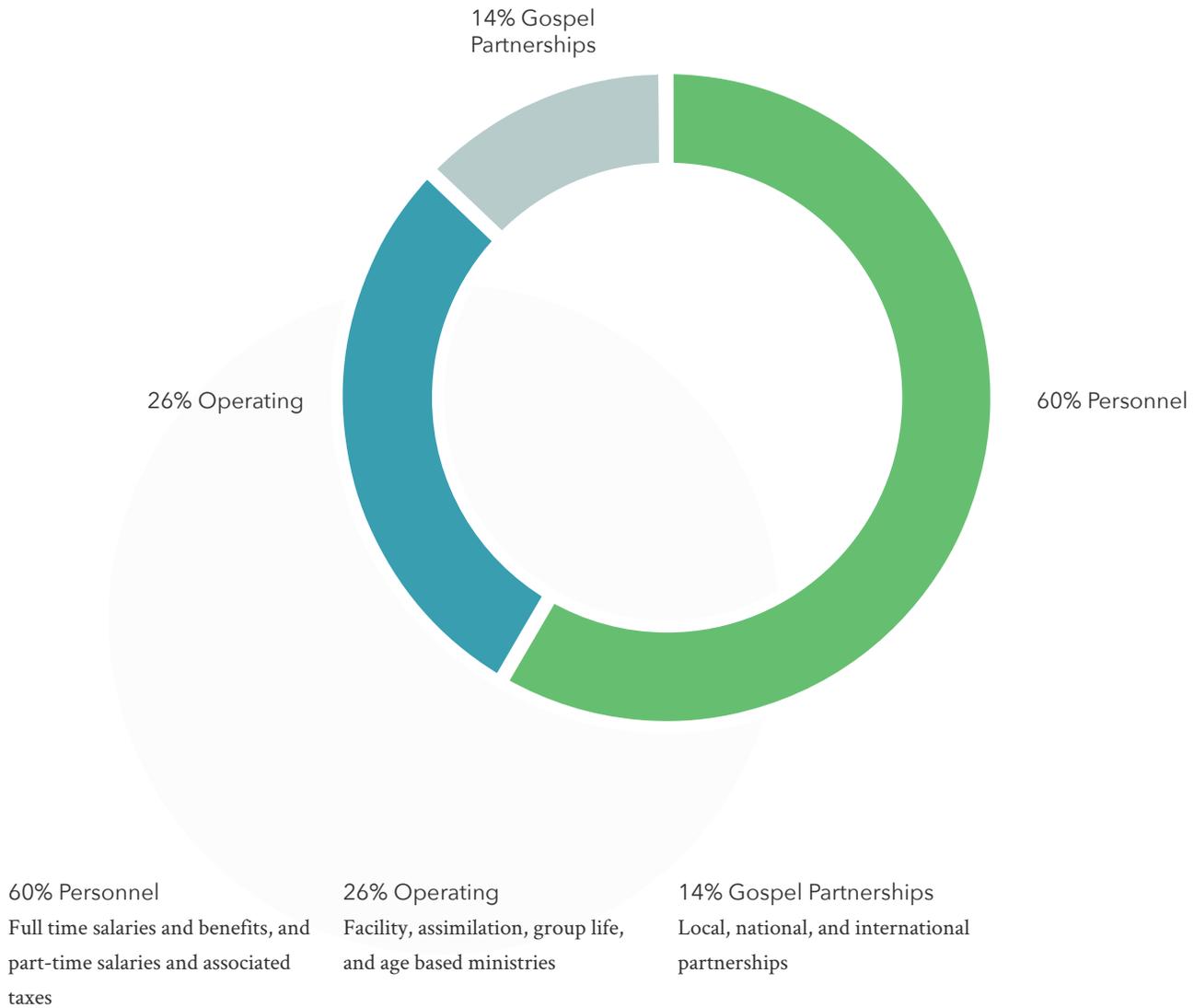
Another year self-sustaining! This is not normal for new churches. PRAISE GOD for his generosity to us in Christ and PRAISE GOD for your generosity to his mission here at The Bridge Church.

2020-2021

PROPOSED

BUDGET:

\$1,220,628.¹⁷



2019 - 2020 Proposed Budget:
\$1,035,936.23

2020-2021 Proposed Budget:
\$1,220,628.17

**AS YOU GO,
GO MAKING
DISCIPLES**
