

Word Tabernacle Church
821 Word Plaza, Rocky Mount, NC 27804
Office of the Senior Pastor
James D. Gailliard
State of the Church Report
September 28, 2024

Dear Word-ites,

I greet you in the matchless, marvelous and miracle working name of our Savior, Jesus the Christ. For those who are newer, it has been my practice for many years to share my heart on paper. My heart on paper is what we call the State of the Church Report.

Let me begin by thanking you. As your Senior Pastor I am blessed to be able to freely pastor you in the way I honestly believe the Lord is calling me. Because of your confidence in my leadership and your support of the ministry we can make decisions that significantly improve people's lives. One of the reasons this Family Business Meeting is so important to us is because at this meeting we provide our accountability back to you as our members. I recognize that not everyone will agree with every decision, and I recognize there will always be things members wished we did or wished we had not done but in the final analysis, all of you have remained so faithful and for that I am truly thankful.

As is obvious, we continue to grow as a congregation. It is all quite humbling that God trusts us with his people. You have already heard about the ministry and management of the church. So, I will not repeat any of that. In this report I want to cover a synopsis of the **SWOT Analysis, Civic Engagement, Discipleship, Staffing and What's Next**.

SWOT Analysis

As you are aware, we asked our members and partners to evaluate our ministry. We believe biblically we have a responsibility to give God quality work, and we see evidence of God's evaluation process when during creation he would take a step back, look at his work and conclude that it was good. We see evidence again when speaking of Adam, God declares that it was not good for him to be alone. Time nor space will not allow me to share all your input, but here is a summary as provided by Pastor Kyle with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

The SWOT analysis from the church members offers a comprehensive view of the congregation's overall perspective on the church's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Summary

The church excels in preaching, teaching, and community engagement, but faces challenges with volunteerism, communication, and inclusivity. Opportunities lie in developing the next generation of leaders, expanding digital outreach, and forming strategic partnerships. Threats mainly stem from external economic and political factors, generational shifts, and security concerns. Members reflect a strong commitment to growth, innovation, and maintaining the church's community impact.

Strengths:

1. **Preaching and Teaching:** Members consistently praise the clarity, relevance, and practicality of biblical teachings, viewing these as the cornerstone of their spiritual growth.
2. **Community Outreach:** The church's active involvement in community support, including programs like food drives, financial help, and educational support, is a major strength. This outreach extends to non-members, making the church a pillar in the community.
3. **Welcoming Atmosphere:** Members value the church's inclusiveness and fellowship, emphasizing a strong sense of community and belonging.
4. **Leadership:** Strong pastoral leadership, especially the pastor's transparency, humility, and active engagement with both the church and community, is a key feature.
5. **Holistic Approach:** The church's efforts to meet spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental needs are appreciated, contributing to members' personal and communal growth.

Weaknesses:

1. **Volunteer Engagement:** A significant issue is the limited number of volunteers, leading to burnout for those consistently involved. Encouraging broader member participation is a critical area for improvement.
2. **Communication:** Members express concerns about ineffective communication, including delays and lack of clarity in delivering information and following up on inquiries.
3. **Inclusivity and Unity:** There are concerns about cliques and the church's overall inclusivity, with some feeling marginalized. Creating a more welcoming environment, particularly for younger members and diverse groups, is seen as essential.
4. **Member Retention:** The church faces challenges in retaining members and ensuring consistent follow-up with those who disengage.
5. **Ministry Development:** Several ministries, such as the music, children's, and care ministries, are highlighted as needing improvement, with calls for better organization and leadership development.

Opportunities:

1. **Youth and Leadership Development:** Members suggest more mentorship programs, leadership workshops, and community engagement for youth, which can foster the next generation of church leaders. The next Generation of leadership includes those in the next generation based on age and those who are the next group of leaders regardless of age.
2. **Technology and Digital Presence:** Expanding the church's use of digital platforms and social media, along with training members in technology, is seen as a way to reach broader audiences and improve ministry impact.
3. **Community Partnerships:** There is a desire for more collaboration with local and national non-profits, particularly those focused on homelessness, mental health, and youth development.
4. **Innovative Outreach:** Suggestions include hosting more community events in public spaces, leveraging technology for evangelism, and creating inclusive activities that appeal to both churched and unchurched populations.

Threats:

1. **Economic Pressures:** Inflation, job losses, and rising living costs are significant concerns, as they may affect financial contributions and the church's ability to maintain operations.

2. **Political and Social Shifts:** Members are wary of political polarization, social movements, and potential government regulations that could impact the church's growth or operations.
3. **Generational Shifts:** There are concerns about retaining younger generations, as cultural shifts and differing values may lead to disengagement from traditional church activities.
4. **Security and Safety:** Threats such as gun violence, racial tensions, and social media negativity are seen as potential risks to the church's stability and reputation.

Civic Engagement

As is evident to all of us Word Tabernacle Church is a very active ministry regarding civic engagement. Civic engagement is a ministry for us. I know some can feel nervous regarding separation of church and state, but the establishment clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution does not prohibit us from educating and inserting ourselves in the political process for the benefit of our members and our community. As your pastor, I love you and our community too much to distance myself from the resources that will make our communities better. For some of you, this may be a new experience and for some it may even be a little uncomfortable. I want us to all be clear that the Bible is a deeply political book. Literally, every book of the Bible has some culture and sociopolitical language.

In **Genesis** we receive a cultural mandate to develop institutions on the earth.

In **Exodus** we see how Moses was a deeply political figure in his confrontation with the Government represented by Pharaoh

Numbers proposes a democratic process under God with the selection of representative leaders.

Deuteronomy affirms the idea of equality under the law

Joshua shows the need for integrity of leadership, and a strong national identity in which morality is required as a distinctive for God's people.

We have clear evidence of what happens in our community when we ignore issues of morality, integrity and character. The income inequality is increasing. The middle class has declined by 5%. For every \$100 in white family wealth, black families have \$5.04; Between 1983 and 2013, the wealth of the median black household declined 75 percent (from \$6,800 to \$1,700). At the same time, wealth for the median white household *increased* 14 percent from \$102,000 to \$116,800.

Judges shows how the Lord raises up and empowers people to lead the nation out of sin, error and judgment. It also shows the need for women to assume national leadership responsibilities.

Ruth shows how social responsibility transcends legal limitations

Samuel 1 & 2 reaffirm equality under the law.

Obadiah affirms that justice cannot be escaped.

Jonah speaks of responsibility beyond the borders of our own race and ethnicity.

Micah emphasizes the importance of morality, integrity and justice.

Nahum explains how freedom can bring both curses and blessings to a nation.

Matthew, Mark, Luke & John cite the governing supremacy of Christ through his statement that ‘*All authority in heaven and on earth is given unto me*’ (Matt 28: 18); and when Jesus told Pilate that ‘You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above’ (John 9:11).

Acts demonstrates a unified and equal community that is governed by council, consensus and majority while illustrating the need to speak truth to power.

Colossians affirms the supremacy of Christ in human affairs by stating that ‘Thrones or dominions or authorities – all things were created through him and for him ... and in him all things hold together’ (1:16-17).

1 & 2 Thessalonians confirms the value and dignity of labor; and asserts the necessity for the rule of law.

1 & 2 Timothy compels believers to pray for government ‘first of all’ – as a priority for the gospel; values the council of elderly people and encourages young people to lead; explains the role of charity; warns against the corruption that wealth can bring; describes a godless society.

Hebrews confirms the equality of all people before God, and how justice is indivisible from mercy.

The list could go on and on. As members, I want to encourage your political involvement and ensure that each of us and those within our influence vote. Voting is a tool to fulfill our vision of “*Everyone Thriving.*” Failing to vote is failing to support the vision so voting becomes a requirement for all paid staff and contractors. As we study the pages of scripture we are called to pay for, pray for, preach to, and participate in the government.

Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of devoting oneself to a teacher to learn from and become more like them. For the Christian, this refers to the process of learning the teachings of Jesus and following his example in obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship not only involves the process of becoming a disciple but of making other disciples through teaching and evangelism.

We have done an amazing job adding members, but we must expand our focus to making disciples. Recently, I was meeting with staff, and we were discussing the “holes” in the ministry – those places that need improvement. The problem became obvious, we only have the challenges we do because we don’t have more disciples. Disciples, serve. Disciples worship. Disciples pray. Disciples forgive. Disciples multiply. Disciples give. Disciples love. Disciples abide. Disciples witness. I am certain that 2,000 disciples can accomplish so much more for God’s kingdom than 4,000 members. I want to begin intentionally leading our congregation in a process that connects people with each other, puts greater emphasis on small groups and thrive groups and that motivates us to serve.

Normally, I make appeals for more people to serve and for more to give. And yes, we still need our members doing both but instead of making that appeal I want us to make disciples. Those disciples will gladly give and gladly serve. I taught a recent Bible Study entitled, “*Taking Inventory.*” It was a difficult teaching on how we will be judged as God’s servants. I would encourage every member to look at it. That teaching really convicted me regarding the quality of what we offer to God, but also if we are indeed living up to our full potential as a church. I don’t believe we are, and I am excited to lead us to a place where one day we will. I hope you will join me in this process.

Staffing

Now that we have completed our SWOT analysis, we will be making some staffing changes to respond to what we have learned. There are some positions we need to add to accomplish what God is calling us to do. I want to first ask you as members to pray for our staff and for the sometimes-difficult decisions I must make regarding our staff. Some of the positions we have identified needing are: Chief of Staff, Executive Assistant, Hispanic Pastor, Youth Minister, First Generation Pastor, Ministry Technician (Data). In some situations, these positions may be filled with Unpaid Staff. These are individuals who have reached retirement age and are financially stable enough to not accept a salary or compensation from the church. These members are invaluable to us because they perform high level essential work with a professionalism from their corporate backgrounds while saving us the associated costs of payroll and benefits. Our single largest expense is our payroll. The challenge is making sure we are being the best possible steward of our financial resources and assessing if we are indeed spending dollars in positions that are most value added to our work. Another challenge in staffing is our ability to sensitively maintain a balance in responding to the new demands placed on the ministry while conserving the necessary resources for our ongoing work. For example, for the first fifteen years of the ministry (up to COVID in 2020) there was only one part-time position in our media area. Now there are five paid full-time positions in that area. Currently Media and Music are the departments with the most paid staff.

While we are working thru these decisions, there have been some changes already made. For many years Pastor Stephanie has been an Associate Pastor. I have now named her Pastor, Faith & Family. Also, Zontrey Thomas joined us as an Audio Engineer. I then named him Technical Director and now he has been promoted to Media Director.

What’s Next?

October

- **Homecoming Weekend:** October 18-20 - Our staff and leaders have worked so hard to provide a weekend of activities. Please plan to be with us. Sunday, October 20, 2024 – 9am service only
- **Pastor Appreciation Month:** A time set aside each year to honor and give thanks for our pastors who give, care, and serve us and our communities in remarkable ways. Each year our church joins churches all over the world in celebrating pastors and clergy. Write a note. Give a financial gift. Volunteer your time. Celebrate their spouse.

November

- **Annual Ordination Service:** Sunday, November 3, 2024, 2pm
- **Election Day: November 5 – VOTE!**

- **Women's Conference:** November 8-10, 2024

December

- **Christmas Worship:** Wednesday, December 25, 2024
- **Watchnight Worship:** Tuesday, December 31, 2024

As we prepare for 2025 this is some of what you can expect:

- The Impact Academy becoming its own stand-alone 501(c)3
- Movement to a Biannual event model (i.e. E4 every two years instead of every year)
- Heavy emphasis on a discipleship culture
- Decrease in spending to best position the church in becoming debt free
- Increased emphasis on roles and responsibilities of Elders and Ministers
- Emphasis on Thrive Institute for Leadership Development
- Increased involvement with Converge MidAtlantic
- More community outreach
- More activity in Thrive Cities
- Establishing deeper missionary relationships locally, nationally, internationally
- Implementation of toolkits
- Developing a WTC Partners model to grow our E-City REACH
- Increasing podcast and high-quality digital content
- Developing and beginning to implement a housing plan
- Installing metal detectors at all primary entrances
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Family, I grew up in a culture watching the deep influence of the church regarding both spiritual formation and social transformation. I watched as a child Reverend Leon Sullivan from the pulpit of Zion Baptist Church start OIC, build a shopping plaza and grocery stores while influencing the policies of General Motors and writing economic sanctions that would eventually abolish apartheid in South Africa. I witnessed Reverend William Gray from the pulpit of Bright Hope Baptist Church become one of the most powerful men in Congress, build housing for teachers and eventually transform the United Negro College Fund. I saw Reverend DeForest Soaries from the pulpit of First Baptist Church in Lincoln Gardens build senior housing and become the first African American Secretary of State in New Jersey.

I still deeply believe in our ability and calling to do similar work. We are in perhaps the most exciting time of our ministry. There are many skills and much knowledge that we still must gain, but if we would be faithful in our serving, giving and witnessing, I am certain the Lord will show us favor with those we need to do truly transformative work in his name. I love and appreciate you, and I am proud to be your pastor.

Everyone Thriving,



Senior Pastor James D. Gailliard