

## What's in God's Heart?

As I reflected on this question, my mind was flooded with thoughts! This morning at Meadowbrook Christian School's Legacy Breakfast, I was reminded of God's Heart! A brief conversation with District Superintendent Anita Eastlack brought back thoughts of the heart of God for Christ Wesleyan Church in Milton.

### **God's Heart is for leaders who will seek after Him!**

*"But now your kingdom must end, for the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart. The LORD has already appointed him to be the leader of his people..." 1 Samuel 13:14a*

Just over a hundred years ago, it was in God's heart to start a church on Center Street in Milton. A few years later, God desired to start a school for ministry training in Milton. Thus, the church in Milton became the foundation of a college that would be moved to Allentown years later. This information was only recently realized by any one of us! Many of the leaders across the Wesleyan Church were trained and prepared for ministry at that Bible college.

The Milton church went through a lot of struggles but ultimately it reached a very low point in the 60s and it was ready to be closed as they found themselves financially in the red, incapable of digging out of the pile of debt. It was at that time when intervention from a district superintendent happened. He believed God wanted a church to remain in Milton and they decided to pay the debts of the church. That leader was J.R. Mitchell, a former District Superintendent of Penn-Jersey and he was the one who persuaded Russell "Pop" Davis to come to pastor at the Milton church. The church continued on a lot of changes through the 21 years of ministry of Russell and Frances Davis. In reflection it is noteworthy that Pop and Mom Davis both attended that same college in Allentown that had its roots in Milton. When Sharon and I began our ministry in Milton in 1981, we had no idea that we would spend a lifetime in Milton. (To be very honest, I was even advised against spending too much time here by one of my respected leaders. Funny how God works in our hearts and lives.) When God's heart began to prompt my heart to begin a Christian school, it began with the full support of Pop Davis as he had the heart and desire for school for a few years earlier. In 1982, after prayer and a lot of hard work, we opened the doors of Meadowbrook Christian School. Sharon and I were both fully invested in seeing Meadowbrook grow and reach our community educationally and spiritually. Interestingly enough, some of the first teachers hired at Meadowbrook were Bruce and Tracey Rehm and Brian Rehm, all having been trained for ministry at United Wesleyan College in Allentown. And, praise God, Bruce and Brian continue to serve after 33 years. So, the rebirth of an education center at Christ Wesleyan, came about through the same root system that had started the original education center in Milton many years earlier. Although United Wesleyan College closed in Allentown, it was still in God's heart to have a teaching center in Milton...and God never gave up!

The beginning of Meadowbrook became a very integral part of the growth of Christ Wesleyan. Within five years, Meadowbrook's enrollment had exceeded the size of the church population. Christ Wesleyan became known as the church where Meadowbrook was located. In fact, at times we were even called Meadowbrook Church. ☺ God's heart for using education to make a difference in our world continued to impact Christ Wesleyan. We are so proud of our earliest and largest ministry, now reaching 330 students, six counties, 19 school districts, and representing 64 churches! A great thanks goes to Rod and Melissa Baughman for their incredible leadership and the role model that they set in ministry!

### **God's Heart is to seek those who are fully committed to Him.**

*"The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." 2 Chronicles 16:9a*

The merger of the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1968 brought about The Wesleyan Church. Each of these groups brought strengths into the relationship. There was the strength of social ministries combined with a holiness message to transform lives. One brought a passion for Christian education and the other brought a passion for missions. I am grateful to say that we reflect both of those passions as well as a desire to bring transformation to our world in the social aspects. This year, in addition to our Well Ministries that are reaching our community, we also added a Wellness Care Director to assist us in building our support ministries, community awareness, and counseling. All of these ministries are assisting us in the mission of reaching our world.

God's Heart is fully reflected in the lives of those who serve at Christ Wesleyan. It is evident in the team working here, as well as the volunteers who come along side to carry the ministry. For each of our team members on staff, ministry is a partnership! It involves more than just our 40 hour work week. It involves our lives and is fully a calling! For this reason, I want to say a special thanks to all of those partners who support our team members and especially to my partner of 35 years of marriage and 34 years of ministry. Thank you!

### **God's Heart is for those who will reach the lost that they might come to know Him!**

*"As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live." Ezekiel 33:11a*

Time continues to reveal God's heart to us and through us and for this we are always grateful. Christ Wesleyan has continued to seek after God's heart and has continued to develop ministries to make that difference. Some of these ministries are non-traditional but it has been exciting to see them develop. Our Hispanic ministry set a new record average attendance of 49 each week. Our Well Coffee House had 48,000 transactions representing frequent guests as far away as Benton, Middleburg, Williamsport, Trout Run and lower Schuylkill County. Well Fit had nearly 2200 pass through their doors for a variety of events and Well Read sold 452 Bibles and Bible Story Books. Our Global Ministries continues to reach locally, nationally and internationally. We support twelve missionary families in eight countries, projects in Haiti, Panama, and Guatemala, and a variety of ministries locally. More than 80 people served in mission

opportunities. Your faithful giving and support of mission opportunities gave us the capability of extending over \$545,000 in missions, outreach, and evangelism. What an incredible blessing to see God work in supplying all that is needed! God's blessing continues to show favor on our ministries! Praise God for our youth ministry that is setting new records in reaching 270 teens! A vibrant ministry of 142 in average attendance, 10 baptisms, and 7 salvations! Praise God for our children's ministry that is reaching 234 children each week! For all of His blessings, we are eternally grateful! We set a new record average worship attendance of 1496. And just in case you think that you are not needed...we had 1,353 volunteer opportunities that were served this past year. The cross is the greatest expression of God's Heart! If He paid that much... if He cared that much... if He suffered that much for us, then our greatest task is reaching others with the gospel of Jesus Christ! Praise God for the 235 people who gave their heart to Jesus this past year with 134 of those being local! And a new record of 47 people being baptized! In the last 3 years, 134 new members have joined the church! Seeing lives be changed for eternity is the greatest blessing we could have! It fulfills the purpose of why we are here! But there is still lots of work to do! We report these numbers just to help us understand how God is moving among us! But we must always remember... *"Every number has a name....every name has a story...and every story matters to God!"*

### **God's Heart is to reach those in need and those at a point of need!**

*"Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy." Psalm 68:5-6a*

God's Heart has always been for those in need and for those who could not provide for themselves. It is a joy to see how God works through your giving and faithfulness to God. Your giving this past year set another record at approximately 3.3 million dollars giving us the capability to doing even greater things in ministry than ever before. Because we take 10% and give to missions (local and global), outreach, and evangelism, we have been equipped to give away over \$72,000 through our Food Pantry and our Benevolent Fund! Our support groups continue to offer care for those going through crisis and our Barnabas Ministry (a care ministry in cards, visits, or contacts) made 1,286 contacts this past year! I am so grateful for the caring hearts of this body of believers.

### **God's Heart is to reach around our world!**

*"And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*  
*Acts 1:8b*

With the power of the internet, we are able to share the light of Jesus Christ with areas of the world that would have never been possible before! During the past year we were able to reach all 50 states and 68 countries with over 100,000 views! God is moving and touching lives! Nearly 8,000 views were on our most viewed page, the sermon video! Pray that the many hearts around our world listening and viewing will have their hearts drawn to His.

### **But what is God's Heart for each of us?**

#### **A. God's Heart is that we would be one!**

*"I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me." John 17:21-23*

Pray that God will continue to bless us with unity! We want the world to see Jesus in us!

#### **B. God's Heart is that we would become more like Jesus!**

*"So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." 2 Corinthians 3:18*

Pray that we will reflect the glory of the Lord as we are changed to be like Jesus!

*"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." Ezekiel 36:26-27*

Pray that we will be obedient to the Lord in all the ways He directs!

*"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14*

Pray that our conversation would reflect Jesus to those in our world!

*"Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children." Ephesians 5:1*

Pray that we would be known more for how we look like Jesus than anything else!

#### **C. God's Heart is helping others to become new!**

*"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Pray that the fire of the Holy Spirit will always burn brightly in our lives that others may be drawn to that fire and experience life change along with us!

It has been a joy to serve you these past 34 years! Sharon and I have been grateful for the opportunity for any difference we have made in your lives! May God continue to work through our lives as we all serve together to make a difference in the Kingdom!

Serving together,  
Pastor Arlie