

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (NIV)

CWC's Mission Statement: Sharing the Light of Jesus Christ with Our World.

My life and ministry verse: *“The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)*

At the end of my annual report last year, I mentioned CWC being an “unhidden church.” As we end the 2024-2025 church year, thank you to all of you who prayed for, encouraged, and supported CWC in so many ways throughout the past year to help us be an unhidden church that fans the flame of Christ's empowering words in Acts chapter 1.

According to Google Ai, to fan the flame means to stir the embers of a fire, making it burn hotter and spread faster. I like that. Is this not what Jesus is wanting His disciples to do when He ascends into Heaven? In Acts chapter 1, verses 9-11 we read about the disciples getting caught looking upward at a Jesus Who was no longer there. An angel appeared and told them to quit staring and go wait for the Spirit and then get to work! The disciples will now fan the flame of Jesus and spread far and wide His Gospel throughout the whole earth. That very same mission, with the very same Spirit of God, is our mission in the 21st Century. This is the mission for the whole church, not just CWC. God, though, has called the local churches filled with disciples to go and make disciples of our communities first, then spread out from there. And Christ Wesleyan has done just that, in many ways.

We will look at those ways, tangibly, in the next few moments.

As I said last year, and want to say again, when we look at our numbers, we want to see attendance and engagement working together. Engagement is just as, if not more important than attendance. It is because engagement is an indicator of successful or unsuccessful discipleship. Jesus calls us to be disciples who make disciples in Matthew chapter 28. Engagement comes in many forms. Our complete 4G process measures engagement (discipleship) here at CWC. It starts with gathering on the weekend, but true discipleship goes beyond the Sunday gathering—this includes our grow, give, and go measures. Many of these measures and stories are found in the CWC Annual Report, available to any of you via digital or hard copy. I just want to highlight a few in this report:

Gathering in weekend services

Our overall, average weekend worship attendance was **1,933** including our Sunbury Campus, which averaged **162** worshippers every Sunday! Wow! God is so good and faithful! Pastor Billy and his team have done an incredible job of leading Sunbury so well! The overall weekend attendance included our Recovery Church, which averaged **130** every Friday! Our Hispanic Ministries hit a record number of average attendance on a weekend and averaged **49** every Sunday! The overall weekend attendance also included our Youth Ministry, which averaged **74** every Sunday across both of our campuses (Milton and Sunbury). Our Children's Ministry is also included in the overall weekend attendance. Across the Milton and Sunbury Campuses, our weekend Kidz Ministry averaged **140** every Sunday. Throughout the past year, **269** visitors shifted from visitors to regular attenders. That is over a **31%** retention rate of visitors becoming regular attenders. The national average is around **5%**. A growing church is **15-20%**. Praise God! According to a new Barna study, as of 2024, church attendance has been in steady decline from 2009. In 2009 the church attendance rate in America was **48%**. In 2024 the church attendance rate was **28%**. Early research has estimated, however, that 2025 is showing an increase to **32%**. According to Barna, younger people and more men are attending church than in the previous year. What God has done across the many avenues at Christ Wesleyan every weekend was incredible and one piece of evidence that CWC is fanning the flame!

Growing throughout the week

We want to be a church that believes deep discipleship does not happen in rows, but in circles—this includes all our group and mentoring opportunities throughout the week. In Acts 2:42, we read that the church met daily in their homes and broke bread together. They did life together. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we should strive to do the same. According to a study done by the Barna Group, only **2 in 5** church attenders are actively involved in discipleship. This past year, we had **717** unique attendees involved in small groups. Our Classics Ministry saw **417** attenders this year! Our Men's and Women's Ministries saw **204** unique attenders. We also offer unique ways throughout the week to grow in our faith. Our Counseling Ministry facilitated **480** sessions. We had **17** Stephen Ministers who ministered to and mentored **14** people who received support. They also were able to lead one person to Jesus! Our Sunbury Campus and Recovery Ministry started multiple ways to grow throughout the week. The regeneration group meet Monday nights and have seen an average of **60** attendees! They also have a Monday night prayer meeting, Wednesday evening women's Bible study, and Thursday morning men's Bible study totaling an average of **34** every week.

Giving of our time, talents, and resources

We are blessed to be a blessing. A big part of discipleship is how we give our time, talents, and treasures. We continued to give well as our tithe totaled **\$3,654,188**. Thank you, and praise God! Out of that kind of giving, we were able to give away over **\$713,000** to mission work both locally and globally. Incredible! In addition, we were able to decrease our debt by over **\$200,000**! Our loan balance came down to just above **\$1.6M**. We also launched a capital campaign last fall to help our Sunbury Campus expand and our debt to be paid off. Our goal is to raise **\$4Million** over the next **2.5** years. We can do this! We have almost **\$2Million** pledged and around **\$900,000** already received. We need everyone involved to reach our goal. We are believing God to do amazing things through our giving! We also value the giving of your time to serve the church body. This past year, we saw **827** unique congregants serve in at least one serving opportunity. Thank you for giving your time and energy!

Going to make disciples who make disciples

Our mission is to share the Light of Jesus with our world. So, we must ask ourselves, "How did we do that this past year?" **Locally**, we have shined the Light of Jesus in many ways. Through Kidz Camp, Valley Fest, and Trunk or Treat, we reached almost **3,000** people! This includes a three-year high at our Kidz Camp of **290** kiddos! Our Food Pantry distributed over **175,503 pounds** of food to needy families with **2,360** family distributions. Our Fresh Express served **126** community families every month. Our Benevolent Ministry distributed over **\$47,000** to families. We were able to host, and partner with Kids Around the World, a food packing event in our Well Fit Gym where **over 300** volunteers gathered throughout the day to pack **121,000** meals! Our goal was to raise **\$24,000** during the month of July and as a congregation you exceeded that goal and gave almost **\$32,000** to provide meals that were shipped to needy families around the world! Our Well Ministries consisting of Well Fit, Well Read, and the Well Coffee House, saw **18** decisions for Christ, sold **166** Bibles (**6,078** since opening in 2012), and had over **32,000** transactions! The Well Ministries also saw over **3,000** visits to the cube and hosted **119** parties for our community. We also partnered with HumanKind water to provide over **222,100** gallons of clean water. Praise God! Meadowbrook Christian School enrolled **350** students and saw **4** decisions for Christ. Praise God!

Globally, we have shined the Light of Jesus in many ways. We had **25** congregants travel to Guachipilin, Guatemala, to build 2 houses for local families in need. Our team hosted a VBS at the church where we saw over **270** children and adults sing and hear about God's love. As a result, **200** individuals gave their hearts to Christ! Praise God! We sent another **27** people to San Juan, La Laguna, to host a medical clinic. Our team worked hard and saw over **700** patients, handed out over **1200** pairs of glasses, and pulled **154** teeth! The gospel was presented to each person who came, and **30** individuals gave their heart to Christ! Praise God! Our Child Sponsorship Program in San Juan, La Laguna and Tzucubal, Guatemala, managed **122** families and **142** kids with the help of **125** sponsors from CWC this past year. Our Online Campus provided our broadcast

services to an incredible **9,661** unique viewers in **40** states and **13** countries. We had over **36,000** visitors to our website spanning across all **50** states and **116** countries.

Fanning the Flame: The CWC Team

As you just heard a fraction of what went on here at CWC, it could not have been possible without a team who is sold out for Jesus. Some of these numbers do not reflect the ministries and ministers behind the scenes. Ministries like our facility, tech, broadcast, and information services teams make it possible for our facility to hold so many events and host so many people each week. We had **18,884** facility room reservations for activities across all campuses this past year! Wow! The behind-the-scenes work of our information services team make it possible to have internet that connects us to the global community. All of us working hard to accomplish one thing: to share the Light of Jesus with our world. To be a church that is fanning the flame of Christ.

I want to, again, thank Loretta Paulhamus for being an incredible Administrative Assistant. There is not a better one out there! I always want to give a shout-out to my incredible wife, Nikky. Nikky, thank you for being my rock and someone I can always count on to make my cloudy days sunny. They say, “Behind every great man, there is a better woman.” That is certainly the case when God gifted me you. Love ya, babe!

Fanning the Flame: Looking Ahead

We continue to have an incredible opportunity that God has laid before us. As we go forward as a church, we want to make sure we stay on mission of sharing the Light of Jesus Christ with our world as we focus on discipleship, missions, and multiplication. As individuals, we need to make sure we are participating in all aspects of the 4G (Gather, Grow, Give, Go) process of discipleship so that we are at our best and most effective to do things we have never done before to reach people we have never reached before. It takes all of us. God wants all of us to be involved.

I am excited about a few things in this upcoming year as we seek to strive in 2025. We launched a Sunday teaching initiative across all campuses to spend a year in the Gospels. Every week we will continue to hear how Jesus lived, what He said, and what He taught His disciples. Let’s continue to lean into what God has for us through His Son.

We are launching our new discipleship process called Growth Track. This is a 3-week class offered on Sunday mornings. It will help our new congregants and current congregants who want to grow in their discipleship. You will learn a lot about who CWC is, and how you can partner with us as God uses your unique gifts and abilities.

Our Sunbury Campus expansion is underway! God has clearly had His hand in guiding us to the correct spot in Sunbury. We have seen how God is moving. We will continue to share stories of life-change. Afterall, this is not a building project, it is a lifechanging project. Our capital campaign will seek to reach our goal of paying off debt across all campuses. I want to be clear, though. This is not about giving money. This is about deepening our discipleship and trust in God as we sacrifice to help fan the flame of Christ. I want to challenge us all to look inside of ourselves and truly want to trust God. I heard a story recently of a believer of 10 years say, “I did not truly trust God until I started to give generously to my local church.” Let us seek to trust God as we gather together, grow together, give to one another and to God, and to go with the authority of Christ to make disciples.

Thank you, God bless you, and I love you, Christ Wesleyan Church. Let’s continue to partner with God as we fan the flame of Jesus Christ throughout our world!

In Him,
Pastor Branden Mestach