

Dear Dr. Chambo, Dr. Newman, pastors, delegates and friends to the 113th assembly of the Dallas District and the 4th assembly of the N/E Texas District,

The Lord replied," Look around at the nations; look and be amazed! Or I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it. Habakkuk 1:5

I bring to you my 5th report, as your pastor, to the awesome people that make up this district team. You have been faced with the incredible and daunting tasks of walking through this COVID season. A season that has created shifts in ministry, shifts in culture, and shifts in personal living. It pushed us to be creative and yet has caused a great deal of turmoil among the people of our church community and our local communities. A season of trying to figure out what the truth is about this COVID environment.

We heard so many voices in our media and on the streets that it has been a very difficult task in how we walk through this time. What will our churches look like in the future? Will there be a NEW NORMAL? Will it ever be the same? Will the church survive? Will the finances be there to continue the ministry to our communities? Arguments over mask or no mask. Having service or not having services. When can we get back together? People saying, they cannot wait to be together again yet are not showing up after some of the restrictions have been lifted. An unprecedented time that our world and the church have never experienced. What do we do?

We have been forced into change. The church has had reluctance to change but, in this season, we have been so called, forced to change. We had to finally admit that church is not the building, but it is found in the heart of God's people in their neighborhood and their world. Schools have changed. The workplace changed. Shopping has changed. Family relationships have changed. Travel and family gathering changed. Politicization of this season has brought out many harmful attitudes. The infighting taking place within our democracy and even our churches has divided us. It has caused us to have attitudes toward each other that are not a pleasing sight for our Creator.

Families have suffered with the effects of this disease. Lingering side effects with debilitating consequences. Separation from our social norms. Mental health issues in all age group categories. Suicides across the age spectrum. Wedding plans were also affected in this season. Plus, many more effects too numerous to place in this report. But the most devastating is the death rate that has brought heartache to so many families. Heartache of not being able to visit those loved ones. The heartache of not being able to say their good-byes in any kind of normal way. Are we depressed yet with this report?

There is a huge "But wait". But wait God has been working. But wait God has not been silent. But wait God has not been in the dark. But wait God hands are very much active among us. But wait God has been building His church. But wait God has taken up the battle for us so the gates of hell will not have its foothold among us. But wait God was up to something. Some of us have seen it. Some have yet to see it. But let me tell you God has been with us every step of the way. God is making a way where there seems to be no way. He is working in ways we may not see. But God is making a way for me(us). Do you see it? Do you hear it? Will you recognize it? Will you walk in it?

But wait God has been at work in the churches across this great district family. He has been and is still doing a work among us that maybe we do not see the full picture currently. We shall soon see that God had and has a plan at work for us to do. The team God has put together here has shown some tremendous perseverance over the course of these months.

Who could have guessed that so many people would join us for our services on Facebook live, you tube, and many other resources that came into existence within this year? Who would have thought that we had so many TV evangelists among our district family? Those faces for TV came onto the screens across our communities, the state, the US, and even around the world. The message reached thousands during this time and we may never know the impact we had on those who listened. We have been told by Jesus Himself that the gates of Hell would not prevail against His church. He once again proved that to be true during this season. He told us to be His witnesses, telling people everywhere-in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth. We DID That, praise His name!!!! You DID that!!!

So, what does the future look like in the days ahead? I do not know. My belief is no one really knows. All the books, experts, government officials, medical experts, etc. have their theories. But they do not know. They have no more idea than any one of you sitting here today. But wait, God knows!

Here is what I do know, God still is calling us to His mission. The mission looked different in so many ways, but it did accomplish His ongoing missional call upon His church. His mission has not changed. The methods have sure changed but His heart for the mission of His church is still the same. What it is?

We're All About the One

For many years I have sat where you sit today and have been challenged from the great district superintendents across our denomination every year with a somewhat new theme for the coming year. The large amount of the time it was very different from the year before. Very good reports, challenging us to a new way of thinking for the coming year.

But as I was preparing my thoughts to share with you in this report for 2020-2021 my heart was strangely warmed to our theme since you have allowed me to be your district pastor, We are All About the One. Everything we do needs to be centered around "the seek and to save" mission that Jesus brought onto the scene. I cannot get away from my belief it is not a sprint but a marathon in our mission. We may feel we had setbacks this year because of the pandemic but let me be clear, your message across our social media platform went out to at least One and I believe that many ONES heard your message. We may not know which ONES, but God used your faithfulness to adopt a new way of church that spoke to more hearts than we could ever imagine.

We have all heard it for years that the building is not the church. It has been spoken time and time again from our pulpits, along with small group studies. We've have heard it for so long that we Amen the phrase, but it has not been lived out very well until this last year. When we could not go to the buildings, we had to improvise a new way to be the church in our neighborhoods. Who could have believed God wanted me to start a church in my hometown in the middle of this pandemic. It was a call upon my heart to be All About the One.

I believe that call is even stronger upon my heart. I desire it to become a stronger lifestyle of each local church and pastor. To make attempts to find your local services in all aspects of your community. To inquire in your conversation what your church can do to better assist them in their work for those in need. It is not going to fall into your laps. It is only going to happen when we follow the steps of Jesus into our world, Into the lives of people and organizations that we can partner with to make His light shine a little brighter to draw all men unto Him. It may be only ONE thing, but that One thing can be a big thing when God is in it.

Along with our continued theme: We're All About the One, you will notice we have added the phrase We're All About Grace. That statement is what our general leaders have adopted this theme. If you were to stop and think about that statement it really coincides with our mission statement. If we're going to be All About the One we will need to be a community of people living out grace in our part of His Kingdom. That grace will be extended to all peoples within our community influence. It leaves no room for racism, profiling, pre-judgement, favoritism, etc. As He extended grace to each of us, we must extend grace to those who may think, act, speak, etc. different than us.

The reason for my continued missional theme is because that is our true mission. To seek and disciple those who need a Savior. To do that grace will need to be a huge condition from within my heart for this to be significant to our calling. We need to get this right. We need to push this agenda to those under our influence. This season of COVID has called us out from within our walls and driven us to touch those Jesus touched. To love those Jesus loves. To walk with those Jesus walked with in His lifetime. He went to the temple as was the customs. But the stories written about Him do not place many pages of His life in the temple. It was outside the walls where His mission thrived. We do have cultural differences from His day, but we do not have to be inside wall people to please Him. His pleasure comes from our outward walk. He loves the praises of His people, but the depth of our love is not found only in how well we worship in here but how we walk out there. How we extend grace.

In my 46 years of ministry, I continue to hear many churches, including here among our churches, how friendly they are. How their church is a loving, caring community. That is awesome but Jesus tells us that it is not what is going on in here alone that should define us. It is how we extend grace to those who do not think like us, do not look like us, do not talk like us, do not follow our prescribed way to live, etc. What will differentiate us from the normal church stigma is how well we show grace and love to those in my direct world where I walk. It is good that we have fellowship in our churches. It is good that we love one another in our churches. But He calls us to love those who are outside our mirrored behavioral patterns, because we are a holiness people. An article I wrote for Holiness Today was titled Holiness is a Dirty Word. Walking in our world like Jesus will be a dirty task but that is why He did what He did. He showed them holiness. We need to disciple them into holiness. We need to walk with them in holiness. Not just to be tagged holiness people.

Now with that out of the way let us get into the bragging portion of my report.

(Pastor's and their spouse please stand)

We have heard it over the past 15 months about the real heroes of this pandemic: the first responders. I totally agree with that assessment. Those who have been on the front line facing the unknown crisis affecting many families around our country and around the world are to be applauded for the diligent work in the health fields. Along with those in our military, police, and firefighters.

But I would like to include these that stand before you as also in that same category of first responders. These individuals have had to adjust and readjust their ministry call. They have had to sit back not able to be alongside of the very ones they love in time of needs, in most cases. They have all become TV personalities overnight. They have had to lead through tough decisions: mask/no mask, anxiety of the unknown in finances, congregations who do not believe or do believe in conspiracy theories, the mixed messages coming from the leadership around our nation, the hard questioning of what will the church look like after this is hopefully over, etc. Innovative on how to do church online. Some of you have no idea the amount of extra work these first responders had added to their plates to keep the plates spinning. Just like our teachers they have had many frustrations and criticisms thrown at them just trying to do what they were called to do. (Seated)

I also know that you who are representing your local mission church have had to adjust. No home has gone untouched by all the changes that were thrust upon us in such a short period of time. If you were like me, I would wake up hoping that a new day would bring the message that this was over. But for many days that did not happen. Kids adjusting to schools. Parents having to adjust their 'normal' way of life. Teachers not having the opportunity to love and teach our kids except through a computer screen. Working from home. Toilet paper, Clorox wipes, paper towels, and many more food items affected by this crisis. I do have to admit traffic was awesome during this time.

The world events and the news media giving us so many mixed messages. Who were we to believe? What information is correct? What theory should we follow? What science research was the one with the true impact of this virus? What medical expert really knew what should be done? I am not sure about you, but I got so overwhelmed with social media that I have discontinued all my social media platforms. It was disturbing to watch people and pastors I know become so vile at times. I am not sure holiness was the theme of our ranting and raging. In fact, I am sure it was not pleasing to God. Watching the unrest and destruction take place was disheartening to watch. My country being divided took me, many times, to the scripture, the longest verse in the Bible: Jesus wept.

But those who stood here today are true heroes. They definitely do not believe they are because most if not all of them would say to us, "we just did what we were called to do." Doing what they were called to do in all the darkness that surrounded us. They remained faithful. They remained passionate. They remained steadfast. They persevered. They loved. They kept running the race before them. They prayed. They gave. They stayed the course.

It is my privilege to be a part of such dedicated families. It is my privilege to walk with them not only in my assignment but also in the church God gave me to pastor. Before you today are an awesome team of N/E Texas families that should be given a rounding sound of applause for a job well done and continues to be done through their ministry to each of us.

Let us continue the brag upon what all of us have done this year. We have put together a chart of your faithfulness in your allocations sharing. The walk this year into the unknown has brought many opinions of what things might look like to an interesting conclusion.

You can see the unbelievable way God provided in spite of what Satan and our culture would have wanted us to believe. I am not talking about dollars and cents here. I am talking about morale. I am talking about momentum. I am talking the miracle of God's provision. I am talking about the God who has been faithful through the hearts of His people. This truly is a huge miracle. I truly hope you can see it like I do. He has been very good.

As we come upon a new year, I did want to bring to your attention a couple of items, that my hope is, you will take some time to think about in your ministries for your community. At A Place of Hope we have a service now on Friday night that speaks well of our mission. It has a second line of vision where we are called A Place of Recovery. It lines up with what God has laid on my heart for this season for me in my community. I am going to ask Marty Hill to come up and talk to us about an area of need that might be something for your church to consider. (Marty)

Again, if you would like to watch what we do to get a better understanding of what could be done in your church call Marty and he can send you a link to watch what we do online for a glimpse into a potential ministry for you.

Another item that my heart has directed me to is a pilot program to address the issue of church health. We are working to develop a format where we can address the Elephants in the room regarding our local church and our ministries. I am grateful for seminars/conferences and the information that we can receive from these venues. From a nationwide venue along with those provided by our denomination. The one thing that has always been disturbing, of course it could just be me, is that I have not seen many results for those who spent the money to attend. Many did not see the results they thought they would get from these seminars/conferences. Also, I have tried to offer resources on our district that has not produced many results from the presentations, even when I have tried to make it easier for you by bringing them around the district to help with time and travel.

I have tried to make the zones smaller so travel and time would not be a hindrance to our participation. That has not produced many of us to participate. I understand where you live. I know a thing or two because I have seen a thing or two.

With that being said, I continued to seek the Lord on what is the best plan He could lay on my heart that would benefit our local pastors and their churches. I mean that with a huge heart of conviction. I do not want to do something just because everyone else is doing that something. My heart wants to provide to each of you some tools to place in your toolbox that will be used for your ministry, where you are.

After much soul searching, where I even went as far as believing you do not want us to add another thing to your plate, the Lord laid on my heart to see if we went to the local church and had some honest conversation where we are at in our ministry to His kingdom could that make a difference.

This idea has begun to develop, and I am pledging to take 2021-22 to flush out what that might look like. Not sure but I go back to a phrase used many times in my life, over the course of 46+ years of ministry, "this seems to be what God wants me to do." Once we see if this "seem" comes into a reality I will take more time to unfold this concept to you over the last years of my assignment to you. If it flops, I will at least believe that I tried. If you do not try something you would never know if it worked or not.

I want to bring to your attention a few things that have come into play in these last two years. If you remember, along with our theme "We're All About the One" we focused on four bullet points to bring the ONENESS into a right perspective.

First, I have actually seen how we have experienced the ONE God in the life of our local church. Seen in our giving to others. Second, because of our participation levels we have seen a ONE another spirit among our team of awesome leaders in each local church. Third under the point supporting and encouraging the ONES call, under the leadership of our BOM we had our first district licensed/ordinands weekend at Scottsville. It was a weekend of practices, teaching, fellowship. What a weekend we enjoyed with those beginning their call and those in their call.

One more item to leave with you today. The last point was Seeking and Walking with the ONES Lost.

It has been a joy being your district pastor and being a local church pastor in my hometown. I have been a bit discouraged over the past few months because there are not a lot of people sitting in our pews after believing that planting this church “seemed” to be what I was supposed to do. As God and I were taking some time together, God showed up and revealed to me something that I failed to see because my vision was concentrating on the pews. The testimony by individuals that have been a part of my family in Forney stepped up to remind me that they do not know where they would be if we had not opened this church called A Place of Hope. Their statements have come to me: if you opened this church just for me it was worth it.

One individual that I would like to bring up (or video) does not attend our church but since January 1st he walked into my life, by the way of Marty Hill (seeding) ministry. He has become a true inspiration to me personally, along with others, as he has walked into my life. He is a testimony to our Mission here on N/E Texas: We’re All About the One. (Jim, Marty and I interview)

That is what I have come to learn this year is the All About the One we should be focused on. It is not about them coming to our church because we invited them, even though that can happen in some cases, but it is so important that the leaders of each church in their community find those outside your wall to begin a connection through friendship and by joining others, outside your church, to be Jesus to your community through their ministry. It is not about us trying to duplicate a significant ministry in your community but to join in their conversation and walking with them. But it also opens other doors that will lead you to find that area in your community that needs someone or someone’s stepping up to fill that void with the love of God.

Finally, I need to take a few moments to thank some awesome individuals who make the movement of our district function so effectively. During COVID like many of you it has affected our district ministries, but these servants have continued to walk faithfully to do what needed to be done in this season. Cheryl, Chip, and Mark for leading our auxiliary departments. Scott McDorman who led us through the first district assessment for our district licensed individuals.

For our DAB who have had many items to work through with all the changes and decision that come to that board on a regular basis. Jerry Williams that handles our finances and records your giving. He has had a great deal of work this year as well.

Larry Williams is a truly efficient district secretary and is very good at moving and receiving new ministers on our district. He is on top of all the general church communication that comes our way. All that bureaucratic requirements over the course of a year. I want Larry to come and share with the district family an item of accountability. Your DAB has been diligent in providing the district family with an evaluation of your district leadership. I wanted Larry to come, give you the results of that review.

I think that covers everyone. Oh! Surely you would not want me to pass up Montie and Sheri. I could take up a whole page of my report to express from all of us how much this couple means to the ministry of our district. They allow me to fulfill the role I enjoy of being district pastor to your pastor, their family and to the church family. So instead of taking a whole page with all the accolades that we could express to them I will just say my two favorite phrases with just two true words needed: “Ask Montie!” “Call Montie!”

But last but definitely not least my appreciation goes out to Pam. She has walked faithfully by my side for over 47 years. She is an awesome wife, mother, and loves being a grandmother. Pam gives her all to her ministry of being a nurse. She walks into her world showing Christ to those that come under her care. Thank you, Pam for walking with me through this bi-vocational year. You all know by now after 5 years with you, that she has a huge job keeping me in line.

As I reflect on all that has taken place during this season it has once again brought to light the working of the Lord even when things happen that we have no control of. The faithfulness of the N/E Texas church family. The leadership of our pastors and their families. The district leadership that has walked us through some trying times. A university president

and staff that have been confronted with issues beyond anyone's imagination. A general church that has had to alter so many plans and norms in their anointed leadership from our gifted leaders in Lenexa.

In that reflection a song came into my life to express the deep feelings of what I have seen over the course of these last few months. I constantly have been reminded of the life verse God gave to me on May 27th, 1975. "I will do what My Father requires of me, so that the world will know I love my Father." John 14:31 NLT

Instead of driving the U-Haul trailer to Detroit for a job with Ford, the trailer followed us to our first ministry assignment in Lombard IL. To work with Bob Lothenore. Since that day in May, until now even through this season, that verse has been carried in my heart from that very first day. It continues to drive me to this very moment with each of you.

This song, in my mind, can reflect OUR testimony. It once again brings us to our knees with thanksgiving because God has truly been good. It calls my heart to sing to Him about His goodness. (Piano/words on the screen).

Let us Pray.

Respectfully and Gratefully Submitted,

We're All About the One

Keven Wentworth