

# Annual Report from the Lead Pastor

## June 2019

To the saints at Union Hill, the faithful in Christ Jesus,

Grace and peace to you. Greetings and happy Pentecost Sunday!

It has been a season of both pruning and growth, sending and blessing, sowing and reaping. The vision of becoming a *Greenhouse Church* continues! God is growing us and preparing us to thrive in new fields and all kinds of soils!

### **A LOOK BACK - THIS PAST "SEASON"**

God continues to sustain and bless his church on this little hill. June 6<sup>th</sup> was our 86<sup>th</sup> birthday (earliest official documentation of a church gathering here is June 6<sup>th</sup> 1933). It was a very special 85<sup>th</sup> birthday/plant-day party we had last September to celebrate. One or two representatives from each of the past 9 decades shared stories and gave God praise for His faithfulness. How encouraging to be a part of something bigger and longer-lasting than any of us! May we see 100-fold harvest in the next 100 years!

I continue to be blessed to serve, inspired to love, and humbled to lead this family-on-mission. This September will mark 10 years as your Lead Pastor.

I want to especially thank Kathryn for her friendship and partnership in life and ministry. She is invaluable to me and a great blessing to our church. It has been another full year with growing opportunities to make a positive impact in public education. We are humbled at the shared and nuanced call we have. We thank the Lord that He continues to give us more than we can handle. This grows us and keeps us humble and dependent on his grace and strength. A special thanks to our parents and friends who through child care enable Kathryn and I to minister together, especially on Sunday mornings. Kathryn and I thank everyone who prays for us and serves our family in so many special ways. Thank you to our close friends who continue to show us grace, mercy...and patience! We are continually grateful to all the saints at UHC who give generously (in service, prayer, and financial support) which allows me to devote myself to the ministry of the Word and prayer, while remaining present and engaged with my children's discipleship and parenting, actively volunteering in their school, serving as HOA president for our neighborhood, while also sowing seeds for the gospel at the "mission field" of 425 Fitness (formerly Gold's Gym).

I am also humbled to serve alongside so many gifted and faithful servant-leaders.

Elders: Craig Hanney continues to give countless hours in service to UHC, through leadership of the Admin team, oversight of Growth Groups, and many other roles. While Craig is being affirmed as an Elder, he anticipates being officially licensed by the C&MA this year to serve in the role of pastor. While the term "pastor-elder" will no longer be used under our new by-laws, Craig truly embodies this role! Phil Lee has continued to serve faithfully as greeter team lead (along with Lori), making UHC a very welcoming place to gather! Phil has already been such a great addition to our Elder team. We look forward to the ways God will grow him and use him to bless our church in the season ahead.

Deacons: Holly Shoubridge, Cathie Coffin, and Eric Albright have continued to give countless hours in prayer, service, and leadership to many vital areas of ministry in our church.

Staff (paid and volunteer): Frankie and Kent Casto continue to bless this whole body by their care of this facility and faithful (often behind-the-scenes) devotion to cleaning and detail. Kris Wilson continues to be a gift to us in her role as bookkeeper. We are so blessed to have a CPA on staff, in addition to her service as treasurer. The treasurer role will pass to Phil Lee (if approved), but Kris will continue in her bookkeeping role. Jane Driscoll has "temporarily" filled the role of Office Administrator. Thank you Jane for your faithful service. We are looking for someone who has the call to take on this role more fully.

Other leaders: For the past year an expanded "ministry team" (PE's, deacons, and ministry leaders) has met

monthly to pray, discuss, encourage, and challenge one another to grow up in all ways into Him who is the Head, that is Christ! (cf., Eph. 4). This team has helped navigate and lead us through transition, which included a rewriting of our by-laws to be in greater harmony with the Alliance by-laws for local churches. The membership unanimously approved the amendment of these by-laws at our special member's meeting on May 19, 2019.

We thank and recognize our officers for serving faithfully this past year: Craig Hanney (chair), Phil Lee (secretary), Kris Wilson (treasurer), and Frankie Casto (assistant treasurer). Our newly amended by-laws will discontinue these officer roles. As aforementioned, Phil Lee will assume the Treasurer's role, and a financial team will be developed to continue the excellence of financial stewardship and transparency that has been established these last many years! One member of the Elder team (appointed by the Elders) will serve as secretary, taking minutes and communicating to the membership.

Thank you to our Nominating Committee: Craig Hanney, Ben Coffin, Cathie Coffin, Brenda Parsons, Chris Usher.

Thank you to David and Daphne Shoubridge who have served as caretakers by dwelling in and stewarding the parsonage and partnering in so many ministries, from music to design to facilities to weddings to hospitality, and more.

It is so clear that our convictions are influencing our life and growth as a church:

**Each One is Gifted to Serve. We Must Rely on the Holy Spirit. Healthy Things Grow and Multiply.** Thank you to ALL the saints who serve faithfully and sacrificially in various ways, each one using the gifts the Spirit has given. Yet there are still many needs. As our ministries continue to grow and change, and as God calls and replants key servants and leaders into new "fields", there are holes to be filled. Yet we are also excited to announce 15 newly affirmed members in the last 3 months!

**Knowing and Living God's Word is Vital. God's Glory is Our Joy.** On Sunday mornings for the past year we have primarily been "walking" through Acts and now Ephesians, attempting to hear God's voice and heart and respond faithfully to him! Craig has led another Essentials Course (being renamed New Shoots—we all need new life and new growth, whether we're a seedling or a mature tree that's been pruned or endured winter and is coming into a new season!). The men have met nearly every Thursday morning at 6:30a to encourage and pray for one another, and to study God's Word together. Biblical, Christ-centered, counseling has continued. Darlene H. and I have served as the primary counselors.

**All things by prayer.** Deacon Cathie continues to lead well in intercession. A group faithfully gathers every Sunday morning at 9:30 to pray and intercede. Various prayer gatherings in one another's homes continue. The prayer chain (email) is active and influential. We have partnered with Awaken Seattle for two 100-day prayer efforts.

**We Need One Another.** We continue to love and pursue one another. From Life Groups to families with young children to youth to mercy to counseling to various expressions of hospitality to ladies retreat to camping trips, we fellowship. May it increase! I want to highlight the renewal of our Mercy Team (previously CGM) under the leadership of Stephanie Bauer. She and her husband Josh, along with Jon and Meka Zieger are the core team responding to needs and reaching into new places in our community with the mercy of Jesus. I hope that each one of us will find ways to serve and bless the hurting, sick, suffering, marginalized, and poor. It's what Jesus did! It's what we're called to!

**Lost People Matter to God and He Wants Them Saved. Faith Takes Risks.** We are continuing to love and pursue the lost. We're blessed to serve and build bridges with the staff at Emily Dickinson (thanks to Jane Driscoll and team). Last year at their request we were able to host their 5<sup>th</sup> grade celebration party! We hosted 3 blood drives in the last year, helping give life (thanks Deacon Holly). We have given generously and compassionately to many in need in our community (Mercy team). We continue to be a "greenhouse" for Jesucristo El Rey. We have prayed consistently and given generously to Alliance mission efforts (regional church-planting and global Alliance

Missions). We continue to support monthly Dan and Ashley Gregory (Mathis) and their church plant The Living Room in Medford, OR, and Wayne and Karen Dalton serving in Saldanha, SA. I have worked consistently this past year to strengthen the relationships with other Alliance pastors and churches in our area to pray, prepare, and plant churches together. I have passed over the leadership to Otis Brown (lead pastor at Holly Park Alliance Church in Rainier Valley). Our Network currently supports House of the Living God, an Ethiopian church meeting in Seattle. UHC helped launch the Smith family to Zimbabwe last August and continues to partner with them and support them as they see God's hand open doors in truly amazing ways. A growing opportunity for greater (official) partnership with the Alliance is taking place! We are anticipating both the Smiths and the Daltons returning to Seattle for a visit and ministry update in the coming year.

**All We Have Belongs to God.** God has blessed us financially through your generosity and stewardship. We were able to give generously, once again exceeding our goal of 10% of all monies received given to ministries and mission "outside of these greenhouse walls"! We continue to consistently pay down our loan on the Annex; on track to pay off the mortgage in half the number of years. Thank you Admin Team for your faithful help in stewarding all our resources! This spring we received a large financial contribution from a friend outside our church who felt led by the Spirit to give. While the sizeable and generous gift is not more than our annual budget, it is more than half. The giver asked to remain anonymous. There were no strings attached as this gift was given to our General Fund. The giver simply hopes and prays that God's Word will continue to be proclaimed, that UHC would be a light for this whole community, and that families will be blessed. We celebrate and receive this as a sign of God's provision for us for the season ahead. We believe this means there are God-sized things in store for us! If you are a faithful and generous giver to UHC, thank you! We call you to continue to partner with us. Rather than assuming our financial needs are covered, please consider how much more God might want to do through all of us giving generously and sacrificially. And if you do not yet give generously and faithfully, what a great time to join in with what God is clearly doing. You have my commitment that we as leaders will pray, seek the Lord, and invest these funds with visionary faith-filled risk. Time to dream what could be! Our first response was to tithe from this gift, blessing the ministries we are already supporters of. How fun! We have distributed 7% already, and the other 3% is earmarked and ready to be distributed.

## **A LOOK FORWARD - TO "THE HARVEST"**

Deo Volente (Lord Willing), we look forward to continuing most (if not all) of the above ministries that have blessed so many.

- We are praying for God to raise up more servants and leaders. We celebrate the Spirit's call on Phil Lee to join the Elder team. We pray for more men to sense this call. We look forward to the "new" ministry team who will serve us in practically advancing our mission and vision. These will be ministry leaders and fill the roles of pastors (if licensed by the C&MA) or deacons.
- We are convicted to continue partnership with Geoff and Renee Smith and family as they see God re-directing them toward an amazing Farm-Hub opportunity. Learn more through [www.thesmithfamilyadventure.com](http://www.thesmithfamilyadventure.com) They are departing from TEAM and moving toward official partnership with Alliance Missions. Please pray as this is all newly developing.
- We are excited about the growing movement to Saturate the Sound with the gospel of Jesus. Twice during the past year nearly 100 churches (across denominational lines) have committed to pray for 100 days. I am currently participating in a monthly cohort with 14 other Eastside leaders and pastors with the hope of working together better to serve our city. [www.saturatetheworld.com/about/](http://www.saturatetheworld.com/about/) [www.awakenseattle.org](http://www.awakenseattle.org) My friendship and connection with Redmond pastors continues. We meet monthly for prayer and encouragement. We are actively pursuing broader partnership in service to our city.
- The Greater Seattle Church-Planting Network has strengthened this past year with 2 prayer and planning retreats, with the affirmation of Otis Brown as the new leader, and we are continuing to pray for church-

planters to be raised up and sent in our region!

- We anticipate a new Growth Group this fall (Deep Roots) as well as another year of New Shoots (formerly Essentials) and Men's Mornings. I am developing a Getting Planted course to help those new to UHC and/or the Alliance learn more about our mission, vision, passion, and distinctives. Planning to launch early 2020.
- July 2019 will finally be the year (DV) that we will fully replace our septic system and resurface our failing parking lot, while maintaining our irrigation well! Thank you to Dan Driscoll for faithfulness and endurance in this complex and often frustrating project. We also anticipate updating our church sign and adding parking lot lighting for increased security at night.
- We look forward to hearing from God how to steward and invest the amazing resources God is entrusting to us through your generosity and even those outside this "family"! Join us in praying and giving! We want to be faithful--and faith-filled! I anticipate investing significantly in people (in the Greenhouse and in the "Fields"), empowering existing ministries, and continuing to invest in the improvement of the facilities we've been blessed with. We have come far in 10 years, but there's a long way yet to go! I like the old African proverb that says "If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together!"
- It burns on my heart to lead us inward and upward. John Stumbo (President of the U.S. Alliance) issued this call at General Council this past week, and my heart and spirit resonates! I implore you to pray for me and with me for clarity around this call. I'm uncertain exactly what shape it will take, but I anticipate at least a few primary areas of emphasis. **New Shoots:** we *must* grow in our conviction and capacity to reach lost neighbors, coworkers, family, and friends. We *must* more effectively reach families with young children in our community. **Deep Roots:** we *must* grow more passionately in love with Jesus and more intimately attuned to the Holy Spirit's presence and power, gifting and guidance. **Diverse Fruit:** we *must* work to break down walls and build up unity across historically dividing lines (racial, cultural, political, intellectual, "chronological" <ie, age>, financial, etc.). We *must* prepare for and anticipate all the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit to be manifest and growing among us!

Let us not lose sight of why we are doing what we're doing and pursuing what we're pursuing!  
This HASN'T changed!

## **OUR MISSION**

**Helping All Peoples Find New Life In Christ and Grow to Bear Fruit For Him**

Oh that we would know God, love him, and trust him!

## **OUR VISION:**

**To Become a Greenhouse Church** – *A healthy, safe, nutritional environment for people to grow and thrive. A willingness and desire to send, bless, and plant.*

**Helping All People Be Field-Ready** – *Multiplication and harvest happens best in the field, not in the Greenhouse.*

**Preparing to Produce a 100-Fold Harvest in the Next 100 Years** – *This vision recognizes and honors our history on this hill and God's faithfulness. We also know that the vision is bigger than us, and can only be fulfilled by future generations. Yet this vision requires intentional action. Each person sowing and cultivating. A 100-fold harvest, beginning with the 100 of us, has the potential to multiply beyond our ability to measure!*

## **OUR VALUES:**

**New Shoots** – *People with new faith in Jesus, and people needing a safe place to belong*

**Deep Roots** – *Growing, cultivating, maturing a deep and vibrant relationship with Jesus*

**Diverse Fruit** – *There is no limit to the kinds and abundance of the fruit we will bear in Jesus and share with others*

#### **4 SIGNS OF BEING “FIELD-READY” (signs of a healthy and maturing disciple of Jesus):**

- 1. Planted** – *In community. Knowing others and being known. Loving and pursuing one another.*  
*Core Conviction: We need one another.*  
*Core Ministries: Sunday Gatherings, Life Groups, Various Events*
- 2. Growing** – *In Jesus. Loving and Pursuing God.*  
*Core Convictions: God’s Glory is Our Joy. Knowing and Living God’s Word is Vital.*  
*All Things Must Be by Prayer.*  
*Core Ministries: Growth Groups (Bible studies, Men/Women, Counseling, etc.), Prayer gatherings.*
- 3. Bearing** – *And sharing fruit. We will produce fruit as we abide and grow in Christ. Loving and pursuing one another.*  
*Core Convictions: Each One is Gifted to Serve. Healthy Things Grow and Multiply.*  
*All We Have Belongs to God.*  
*Core Ministries: Various ministries and ministry teams. Giving generously and sacrificially.*
- 4. Sowing** – *Seeds. We must cultivate friendships with lost people and look for opportunities to share the hope of the gospel in whatever “field” we find ourselves planted in (wherever we live, work, learn, and play)*  
*Core Convictions: Lost People Matter to God and He Wants Them Saved. Faith Takes Risks.*  
*We Must Rely on the Holy Spirit.*  
*Core Ministries: Various sowing teams (Mercy, schools, counseling, church-planting, outreach, international missions)*

**NEXT STEPS** – *In order to devote ourselves fully to the pursuit of this vision we must do 3 things:*

- 1. LOVE.** If we don’t begin with love we choose to be ineffective and irrelevant. The Apostle Paul said as much in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. When a wise man asked Jesus “What’s the absolute most important thing we must do?” (paraphrase), Jesus answered, “Love. Love God with all you’ve got! And love your neighbor.” Later Jesus would clarify that our neighbor is all peoples. Those like us. Those not like us. Even our enemies (Luke 10:25ff, Matt. 5:43-47). Let us love as God loves.
- 2. PRAY.** I’m calling and inviting us all to be committed to prayer. This vision will not be realized with just a few praying, but it will take many, especially our members. This vision will not be realized without the power of the Holy Spirit in and through us. So it begins, continues, and is sustained by prayer: “Lord, stir our hearts. Lord, break our hearts with what breaks yours. Lord, make space and fill it--in our hearts, in our lives, in your church! Your work O Lord, revive it! Be with us Lord. Grow us and use us for your glory. Spirit lead us where our trust is without borders. Help us join you in breaking down walls.”
- 3. ENGAGE.** I invite you and call you to be fully planted and rooted in this Greenhouse! If you’re not planted in community, seek the Lord’s leading on how best to “be planted.” Please be intentional and take initiative. If you’ve been waiting for an invitation, let this be one. Here are some ways: Join a Life Group. Make Sunday gatherings a priority. Join a Growth Group. Join a ministry team (discover and use your gifts to serve others). If you’re not yet a member please pray about it and at least pursue a conversation with me or one of our Elders or deacons. If you’re not yet giving generously and sacrificially to the General Fund, please do. We believe God is going to multiply our opportunities for eternal significance, as he is already proving. There’s no greater return than in Kingdom investments.

In awe of who God is, astonished by what he’s done, amazed by what he’s promised to do, actively awaiting its fulfillment! I am humbled and emboldened to love and lead in the season ahead.

Benjamin Coffin  
Lead Pastor