



COVENANT ALIANZA

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH • IGLESIA PRESBITERIANA

MAY 2024

COVENANT ALIANZA

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The Joy of Kingdom Mindedness

John Kidd, Pastor of Youth Ministries

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.*

—MATTHEW 6:33

As followers of Jesus we are to live in light of the kingdom of God, to seek it first. Christians are to be a kingdom minded people. All of this is for God's glory, for our joy, and for the good of our watching neighbors. Our vision of *Welcome* and *Worship* is a daily reminder that we are people of God's kingdom.

The kingdom of God (also stated as the kingdom of heaven) encompasses all that is under the rule and reign of King Jesus, including the church and heaven. The kingdom of God is everywhere, usurping every earthly authority. Uniquely the kingdom of God is a "backwards" kingdom. Our regional youth retreat is called MODGNIK, kingdom spelled backward. This branding is an attempt to help our youth grasp the exceptional nature of God's kingdom in contrast to the kingdoms of mankind. It is counter-culture to believe purpose and joy can be associated with the pursuit of any kingdom other than the kingdom of self.

MODGNIK

The world is dedicated in its admonishment that you wholeheartedly seek-ye-first, literally, seek-yourself-first. You deserve it; you are worth it. You have earned it; you should buy it. Jesus challenges humanity with a bold command to turn away from self-promotion. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2). This turning from one kingdom to another has ripple effects in all areas of life.

"The seeking of the kingdom of God and the pursuit of righteousness is the main and central business of every Christian life." —Jonathan Edwards

Covenant Presbyterian Church is and will remain a community of believers who desire to seek first the kingdom of God. Preaching the gospel, outreach, and discipleship are kingdom work. Honoring King Jesus with your vocation,

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in your home, and with your neighbor is also kingdom work. God's kingdom deserves centrality in the life of the believer and the commitments of the church. The fruit of this mindset is joy for the citizens of heaven. There is joy in living in light of the kingdom of God, in light of eternity.

We all need the regular reminder that the most valuable assets in life are otherworldly. Calvin University professor Kevin Corcoran states it bluntly, "It seems the more we desire happiness, pursue it, and consume products we hope will help us to achieve it, the less happy and more depressed we become." Biblical joy is not found in the pursuit of happiness among the physical and temporal pleasures of this world. "For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18b). Joy and freedom are to be found when we live, invest and enjoy eternal things.

I am inspired by John Calvin's charge, "We must make the invisible kingdom visible in our midst."

One way we are visible to the watching world is our physical building on top of the hill. We are visible in our Sunday worship and weekday ministry activities. Just the presence of a visible church building in a community has significant impact. For we are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city on a hill cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:13-14). Covenant Presbyterian Church, a City on a Hill, offers the light of the gospel to our community, that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven.

A City on a Hill—the most important of structures. It's hard to find a more critical physical building in a community than a faithful Christian church. A church classroom, different than a high school or university room, is a space in which the faith will be passed along from one generation to the next. There is no more important classroom. The same could be said of a church office or church foyer. It is in these spaces that the invisible kingdom becomes visible.

As you have been told we are headed into a season where we will be improving our physical building adding more space for teaching, welcoming, and fellowship. Throughout these months we will be challenged to grow



in our understanding of stewardship and generosity. But this is much more than raising capital to build more square footage. Remember, as resident aliens in this world belonging to a heavenly kingdom, we are investing in the unseen heart-work of gospel ministry.

You may be thinking, wasn't this article supposed to be about joy? Exactly. Those who find the kingdom of God will be full of joy. It is a treasure in a field, worth selling everything you have to obtain it. Scripture is clear, the kingdom of God is the greatest of treasures, of inestimable value, to be **joyfully** sought above all other pursuits (Matthew 13).

Our calling is to make disciples of all nations. To invite our neighbors to *Welcome* and *Worship* in the name of the King. Let us commit to seeking to move from being consumers of the kingdom to investors in God's kingdom. Investing our time, talent, treasure, and relationships in eternal things. Laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Believing, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What an exciting time in the life of our church. We have been deeply blessed over the past 40 years; let us prepare for the next 40 years of faithful gospel ministry in our community. This is the joyful life; seeking and treasuring the Kingdom of God above all else.

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Get to Know the Mahaffeys

Just over a month ago, Phil Mahaffey joined our staff to begin his work as the Director (and future Pastor) of Cross-cultural Ministries. We figured after a month of being here it was a good time to check in and learn a little bit more about him and his family.

Phil is originally from Annapolis, Maryland, and his wife, Karina, is from Mexico. They have two children, Talitha (8) and Pablo (4).

Phil and Karina first met when Phil spent a semester abroad at a university in Mexico City. Phil got involved with the RUF ministry at the university and volunteered with the English Club outreach ministry, which utilized English language learning opportunities to meet students and build relationships. Karina participated in this club, which is where she and Phil first met. Little did they know that a longer-lasting relationship would be formed!

Phil returned to the States and finished his degree program. After graduation, he soon joined the Peace Corps and served in Panama for two and a half years. During this time, he and Karina began communicating more intentionally. This would often involve Phil waking up at four in the morning, riding a cattle truck down a mountain road, and then walking to a small town that had a pay phone he could use to call her.

When his Peace Corps service ended in 2011, he moved back to work as an intern with the RUF ministry at the university in Mexico City. The pay phone conversations would pay great dividends because, in a whirlwind 2012, he and Karina started dating, got engaged, and then got married! They lived the first three years of married life in Mexico City and then moved to Maryland in 2015, where they have been until their recent move to Harrisonburg.

When asked what they are excited about with being here at Covenant/Alianza, Phil first mentioned how welcomed they have felt as they've begun to get settled. They are excited to get to know the church better and form deep friendships. Phil also mentioned the draw of being on a supportive team that can challenge him, and he is looking forward to how God will use him and his family in this new season of ministry. He and Karina are very encouraged by the cross-cultural engagement that is already taking place. They are ready to jump in and help with the further development of these ministries.

It has also been a blessing for his family to be in a church context that has a Spanish-language emphasis. Being that this is a big part of their family story, this has really encouraged them.

When not engaged in church activities, you can find their family going for walks, riding bikes, nerding out over Star Wars, enjoying pancake breakfasts, and going to the beach (we haven't told him yet that Bennies Beach in Fulks Run is the closest thing we have to the Chesapeake Bay!). Phil loves a good cup of coffee, playing his guitar, reading, and meeting with people. He fits right in with the pastoral team.

We are excited to see how God will use him and his family here at Covenant/Alianza and we are thankful to the Lord for bringing them to us.

