



Hello church family!

As we wrap up our summer quarter and transition into the fall quarter, I wanted to touch base and let you know how things are going here at the Bridge. It's been a great few months and God has really been moving in our tribe!

What am I celebrating from Summer Quarter?

It's hard to know how things are "really" going in a new church, because there isn't anything to compare. In most churches, Summer is a time when things slow down. The calendar is empty, giving tends to dip, and those that have been pushing hard stop long enough to take a deep breath. Well... absolutely none of that was true for our summer.

I assume this has been our busiest summer in a long time. We had a great VBS, changed our BridgeKids curriculum and format, began investing in praise and worship, re-painted the Children's Wing, hosted a church workday, and even capped things off with a church picnic! And that's just what I remember off the top of my head. Additionally, our giving was up this Summer from months prior, and there wasn't really any rest for the weary. But that was because God was moving!



If you peek at our prayer wall when you walk in our building, you will see that God is accomplishing some major things through The Bridge. We set some goals for the end of the year that were quite bold, and yet we are more than halfway there on most of them already. Our attendance is up considerably, having doubled most weeks, and even tripled for our Baptism/Church Picnic Sunday. I heard several people mention that they haven't seen our sanctuary that full in some time! We celebrated three baptisms and have at least four more on the way. I am currently holding New Members Classes, and I expect to have 5 or 6 new families join our church officially. And it continues to blow my mind that we had 37 children with us a few weeks ago! We have more kids now than we had in total attendance some weeks earlier in the year.

But if there's one thing I am most excited to celebrate, it's that I saw hope, and joy, and life in a group of people that I have come to absolutely adore. I thank God every day that He called my family here to serve this group of people. All of the "no's" and "closed doors" that didn't make sense before... well they make sense now. This truly feels like a divine season, where God has brought us all together in His perfect timing.

What am I looking forward to in our Fall Quarter?

I'm looking forward to finding a rhythm and shifting gears. This Fall is where we get to enjoy consistency by putting some systems and processes in place to hold onto our summer momentum. This Fall our Serve Team Leaders will meet for the first time. They will form our "Directional Team" that will be charged with strategically moving our church forward. A lot of this Summer we leaned on my own personal past experience to help us stabilize, and to provide a foundation for moving forward. But starting this Fall our team-based ministry model begins to take over, and that is exciting for me in so many ways! I expect us to have renewed energy as ministry is released back to all of us. The church is at her best when everyone is bought in, serving, using their gifts, and growing together. We will start to experience some of that this Fall for the first time in a long time.

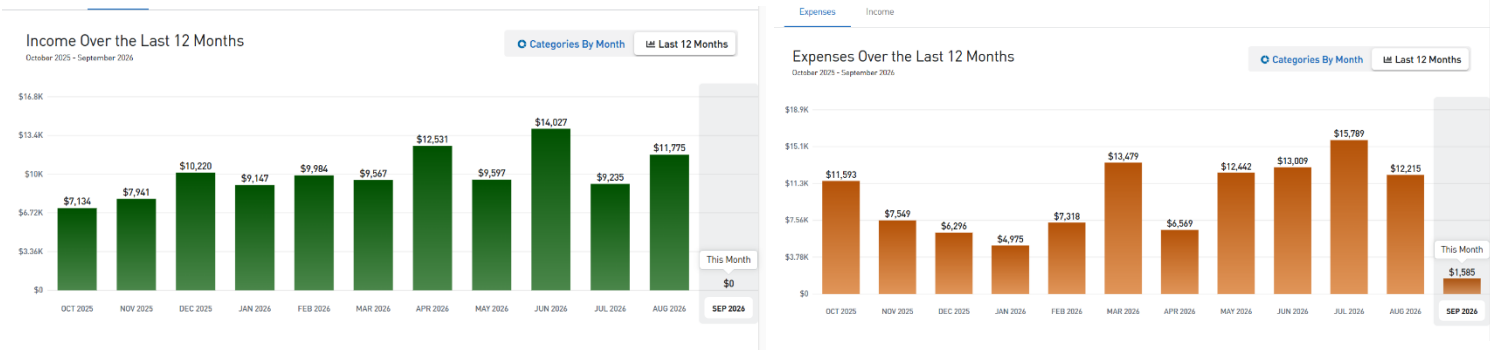


I'm also a sucker for all Things "Fall." So you know I'm excited about our church-wide Fall Festival on October 24th. Yes, in case you are wondering, it was scheduled on Ohio State's Bye week on purpose. Not my first rodeo. While our church picnic was really more for us, and was simply about enjoying fellowship with one another, our Fall Festival is really more about our community. We want fellowship events to be life giving (such as the picnic)... but our outreach events are going to require something of us. We are giving that life back for the sake of inviting others into our church tribe.

So, as we start advertising that event, look for ways to help and plug in; and be thinking of people you can invite. We of course hope you will enjoy it as well, but it's primary purpose is to start reaching our local community. More details about this event will be coming in the next few weeks, but we hope to create a "walk-through" costumed experience, where each of our rooms are decorated with different games or activities, when our friends exit the backdoor they take a hayride, and eventually they are dropped off at a caramel apple stand where we let each person pick out their own gourmet Caramel apple made by the Bridge Church.

Finally, we will have our first "Vision Sunday" on October 18th, which is also the Sunday we will have our congregational meeting. Make sure you are here, it will be a great week!

How are we doing financially?



This was the first ministry quarter we completed together, so for the first time we have some financial trends that we can share that are more honed in. Over the last quarter our average weekly expense cost was **\$3,155.00**. Our average weekly income was **\$2,695.00**. That means on average, we are **\$460.00** a week in the red.

With limited information available, I had projected our weekly expenses to be around \$3,000.00 a week, and our weekly income to be around \$2,250.00 a week. I was close on expenses, though I do expect those to still increase as we begin to implement more ministry. However, our giving was not only more than I anticipated based on past patterns but increased during the Summer months. If you are newer to our church family, you might see that we are in the red and be concerned, but this is actually a cause for celebration. We've been able to close our negative financial gap in the past quarter.

*(The gap I'm referencing assumes for a FT Pastoral salary; which is not represented by all months on the above graphs).

In fact, my projections for our PREACH plan needed us to average \$2,250.00.00 a week by the end of this year, increasing incrementally to \$2,750.00 a week by the end of NEXT year. So, this is a major win!

I haven't had a chance to preach on a philosophy of giving yet here at the Bridge, but as our New Members are going through the class, they are learning that I preach a giving principle, not a giving percentage. We are not a church that requires congregants to give a certain percentage of their income in order to be members. In fact, there are only a couple of people that even know who gives, or what they give, that are on our finance team. I am not one of those people.

When new members sign our “Covenant to Belong” they commit to increasing personal expectation by having a posture of giving. That will look different for each family. I have told families before, if you don’t feel like you have anything to contribute financially, then just commit to giving a dollar a week, and just be faithful in that gift. **It’s not about the amount, but our posture** to saying yes to God, and expecting him to multiply we do bring as our offering. Then we pray for God’s increase in our life, and as we are able, pray as a family about what he would have you sacrificially commit to giving. Giving is the one area where God tells us to test him, and he promises to work in our lives through that posture.

I believe in that spiritual principle so much that I’ve told members before, that if they didn’t believe our church was producing good spiritual fruit, then don’t NOT give, just give somewhere else, to someone or a church that is producing good fruit. But still give, because God moves through that. But if our church is having an impact in your life, and you can see us producing Kingdom fruit, then you should WANT to invest here, because you are partnering with God, and He is working through you. Giving is not an obligation, in fact scripture tells us *to not give out of obligation or compulsion*. Rather, it is simply the posture of someone that is, as we talked about this last week, “All in!” Giving is an act of worship, and a way we invite God to work in our lives. I used to struggle to speak on giving as a pastor, I was worried how people might perceive those conversations. But now, thankfully, I’m older and wiser. And I want God’s best for the people I care about; and giving is part of God’s best for our lives. So, I’m going to talk about it! No guilt. No compulsion. Just an invitation to be part of what God is up to. Even if that’s a dollar a week.

I also can’t help but put a challenge out to us corporately. A \$460.00 deficit a week is not a lot for a growing church to make up. If every potential giving unit in our family was to give or increase just 10.00 a week, we would be in the black immediately. I plan on hopping onto our online giving App after I write this letter and increase ours by that amount. That wasn’t something I was expecting to write when I sat down to do this Newsletter... but after recapping the last quarter and looking forward to the next one... I just can’t help but want to push us forward. And the day we hit the black for a whole month, we are going to celebrate like crazy, *because that means every dollar that comes in above that number isn’t just about keeping the lights on... but is directed towards ministry and reaching new souls!* So, yeah. Let’s push it!

If you haven’t utilized our online giving platform yet, it’s up and working. You can sign up for recurring giving like I have done (since my family would simply forget on Sunday’s, we are a bit busy). That’s at thebridgesunbury.church/give.

Who deserves recognition?

There are so many people that deserve recognition for the selfless service in this past quarter. In fact, when Krista and I arrived at church this past Sunday, she just paused outside and said something that almost brought us both to tears. She simply said, *“This church just has so many faithful, selfless servants. We are so blessed to be here.”*

However, this Newsletter is already long, so I’m limiting myself to one person! And if I’m doing that, it has to be Emily Smith. Emily took over our Legacy Team and has implemented a years’ worth of work in one summer. She is a big reason why our children’s ministry continues to grow. Emily is doing the amount of work that a paid staff person covers in most churches.



The next time you check your kids in to Children’s Church, make sure you thank her. Most people have no idea the hours that she and her family have put in to make sure this church has continued to prioritize children, even when struggling through the hard seasons. Emily, thank you. You are producing good fruit. God see’s your effort, and we do too.

Where are we at in our PREACH plan?

Prepare to Receive: We have been preparing to receive the whole summer... and yet God has already sent us people to receive. Sometimes I feel behind the 8-ball because our growth has outpaced our systems and processes, but we won't complain! We are hoping to have our Serve Teams fully operational by Vision Sunday, on October 18th. That is a big part to wrapping up this season of preparation.

Restore Awareness: This Fall we shift into a season of restoring community awareness of our church where we will focus on things like our Fall Festival, personal invitations, social media engagement, and maybe even Livestreaming before the end of the year. These pushes are necessary for helping to reconnect with our community. That being said, the single greatest way to restore awareness about what God is doing in the Bridge, is for you to simply talk about our church to others and invite them to join us! There is nothing as effective as a personal invitation. It's our goal to create a consistent, but exciting weekly opportunity for people to experience a loving community, the presence of God, and the transformation that comes through God's Word. This phase of the plan will go through our fourth quarter (Now through February 27).

Exercise Influence - Attract the Seeking - Cross the Street - Harvest Hope

What do I think? What do I wonder? What do I know?

What do I think? I think that I have a new appreciation for God's preparation, and his perfect timing. Krista and I have been through many struggles in our 20 years of ministry. We have been prepared in many unique ways. And during this last transition for us, which was the most difficult one of all, we told God that we weren't interested in another revitalization. We asked him for an out. And he said no. Forcefully. Several Times. And each one of those "no's" was very painful for us. And yet, if we knew what we know today about the Bridge, we probably wouldn't have fussed so much when he was equipping us and sending us places against our will.

These past four months have been incredible for us, and we have been amazed at what happens when God opens the door he wants. The closed doors still hurt. But I think God was preparing the Arnold's for the Bridge, often through difficult trials. And I think he was preparing the Bridge for the Arnold's... also through difficult trials. But in his perfect timing, we are seeing the kind of ministry fruit that is so extraordinary that neither of us would dare try to take credit for is. We've experienced fruitful growth before, but never like this. I think this is what it looks like when God's perfect timing shows up. And it only makes me want to submit to Him, and trust Him more.

What do I wonder? I wonder about how God wants us to be a unique outpost of heaven in this community. I believe that each local church should be somewhat unique, to reach a unique set of people that others can't. I wonder about the direction God is taking us and how it will look the same as other churches, and how it will look different. We are still very much developing our identity. Part of it will come through our core people that have been here, part will come from how God has formed me as your pastor. Part will come from the people he's called us to minister to, and those he brings to us and their gifts that they will use as part of our family. But there is a divine calling on our church I wonder about, that I'm excited to discover as he reveals His purposes for us.

What do I know? I know that as long as we are people of the Word, people of prayer (I KNOW that's a big reason why we are experiencing growth, we have committed to prayer), and we continue to prioritize Christian preference of one another... that God is going to do some wonderful things through our church, because He is faithful.

Final Thoughts: We have had a wonderful first quarter together, that has probably surprised most of us. I want to keep being surprised by God, and I want us to keep the sense of wonder and excitement he has made part of our church. Make no mistake, as we take Kingdom ground, Satan will counter. But as long as we truly, actively, choose to love one another, and biblically love our community, we will continue to be surprised at how amazing God is, and what he can accomplish through His local church.