

Coram Deo

BEFORE THE FACE OF GOD

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Introduction & Vision

Coram Deo is a Latin phrase used historically by the church to describe true Christianity. It means “*before the face of God*.” Our purpose and our privilege for all eternity is to consciously live in the presence of God, which is marked by fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). Often, however, this purpose is lost, and this privilege is missed, resulting in people settling for less than God’s best.

At Rock Bridge, we refuse to settle, and so we are launching a multi-year journey called *Coram Deo* to disciple and teach our people, as well as others, to live their lives in God’s presence, knowing that He is with them in life-changing, eternity-altering, and joy-sustaining ways. In summary, we want the decisive and dominant presence in our life and throughout Rock Bridge to be the presence of God who is with us. We want to seek Him, know Him, and enjoy Him now and forever.

This spiritual journey will take persevering resolve and ongoing surrender to the Holy Spirit’s work in and through us. Living in the presence of God involves three commitments:

- **Find fullness in the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19)**
 - Everyone is seeking fullness and trying to fill the emptiness within. Only God can satisfy sufficiently and eternally; substitutes never do.
- **Forge fellowship in the family of God (Romans 12:4-5)**
 - God places His people in a spiritual family that is unified in Christ, living in fellowship and serving one another in love.
- **Follow Jesus on mission and in ministry (Galatians 5:13-14)**
 - Jesus commissions us to go, to serve, and to seek His Kingdom.

Additionally, our spiritual leadership has examined virtually every aspect of Rock Bridge and identified several areas for action that will increase our faithfulness and honor God's presence:

- **Reclaim:** areas where our faithfulness has slipped or potential is not being met
- **Level Up:** areas where we are being called to greater faithfulness and fruitfulness
- **New Territory:** areas where we sense the Lord calling us to boldly advance and seize new Kingdom territory

We believe the spiritual resolve of Coram Deo is something God can and will bless for His glory. 2 Thessalonians 1:11

The best is yet to come!

-Matt

Background

Historically, Rock Bridge can mark numerous “inflection” points of spiritual traction and momentum on our journey of ever-increasing faithfulness to God, His Word, and His purposes for His Church.

For perspective, several of these are highlighted below:

- The Launch of RBCC with a determined and intentional focus on reaching the disconnected, a passionate theological emphasis on grace, and a resolve to uphold, preach, and teach the Bible as God's sufficient and authoritative Word so that people can—by God's grace—be *doers* of that Word.
- The Purchase of the Wink Theatre and the Next Steps campaign as acts of bold faith
- The launch of multi-site and corresponding sense of stewardship to bring Gospel preaching, Gospel presence, and Gospel community to mid-sized/small towns in our region.
- The Great Recession and the recognition that to be faithful, we must be more incarnational and missional in our community,
- The BOLD (and BOLD-er) Campaigns to build three physical campuses over a 5-year period.
- Periodic unified initiatives to serve as accelerators and catalysts for the church's edification:
 - The Prayer Project; Red Letter Challenge; Sacred Assembly
- Self-reflection about the state of discipleship and faithfulness to the Great Commission.
- **2010 Paper:** re-emphasizing the importance of reaching lost people and making disciples.
 - **MISSIONS:** 15% of the budget as the target; mission trips as part of our DNA
 - **CONNECT GROUPS:** emphasis on the importance of group health
 - **HOPE:** conceptualized
- **2014 Paper:** emphasis on the importance of being a missional church, discipleship, and prayer.
 - Vision for launching a Hispanic service
 - Importance of prayer during First Wednesday

- Restated the value and importance of healthy connect groups, HOPE initiatives, and disciple-making
- **Gospel-Centeredness:** the post-COVID reflection that saw us re-commit ourselves to the gospel as of “first” importance.
 - Gospel-Centered Worship: the gospel shapes our liturgy
 - Gospel-Centered Shepherding: moving others toward the full privileges purchased and provided by the Gospel and from the abundance of God’s being (Psalm 23; the with-God life)

Lessons Learned & Perspective Gained:

- **Shared orthopraxis (correct action and application):** Rock Bridge is at our “Holy Spirit” best when we are not driven by preferences or traditions, we intensify our zeal for His Word, we consistently talk, teach, and focus on specific biblical values and practices, and finally, when we do this collectively and throughout the various expressions of church life.
- **Sustained consistency & emphasis:** There are real and important demands that press in on leadership (*the whirlwind*) as well as the congregations of RBCC, such that a natural shift in time & energy toward the urgent and the immediate can occur at the expense of the strategic and the missional. By maintaining a sustained focus that the church intentionally centers on, we can more readily adopt a missional posture while still pastorally loving and administratively managing the church (see *Acts 5:42 in context*).
- **Advancing beyond the unintended consequences of the ‘church growth movement’:** Most evangelicals—like RBCC leadership—want to see more people reached. To some extent, many of us “cut our ministerial teeth” in the ethos of the church growth movement (CGM) and the nationally known churches that reflected its practices. However, some of these practices are in tension with biblical principles. It is easy for us to stay with or revert to “what we know.” By establishing aims and objectives that are biblically derived and aligned, we provide our leadership with a target that pushes us beyond what we may have previously accepted as “normal” from the CGM. Examples of these tensions include:
 - *Disciples vs. decisions*
 - *Names vs. numbers*
 - *Worship by preferences vs. for God’s presence*
 - *Programs vs. people & purpose*
 - *Being seeker-driven vs. seeker-sensitive*

Overview

What we are now envisioning is a new and intense season of intentional focus, consistent practices, and holy ambitions centered on inviting and discipling people into the fullness of God. Such that life is lived in His presence as redeemed sinners, adopted children, restored and transformed image bearers, and ambassadors of Christ's Kingdom.

Past generations of Christians sometimes spoke about "living below the level of our privileges" in Christ. Our privileges in Christ are vast, abundant, and sufficient. They are ours through our faith union with Christ. These privileges form the basis of our joy, our evangelistic proclamations, our sacrificial and missional presence, as well as the aim of all growth in Christ.

One of the great biblical descriptions of the life that is privileged to be lived in God's presence is found in Psalm 23. This psalm teaches us who God is and who we become as we accept the invitation to live in His presence and be led by Him. Psalm 23 is the biblical framework for the season we are envisioning. It beautifully describes the character and plenitude of God and the provision He makes for those who know Him as shepherd. It also describes what we at RBCC want for all Rock Bridgers, as well as the unchurched in our region.

Another, more concise yet powerful description of this season comes from the Latin phrase, "*Coram Deo*," which means "before the face of God." Pastor and theologian R.C. Sproul said that the "big idea of the Christian life is *Coram Deo*. *Coram Deo* captures the essence of the Christian life." It means that one's entire life is lived in the presence of God, under the authority of God, enjoying the privileges of God, and all for the glory of God.

In some respects, this season is a coalescing of various current movements and trends within RBCC:

- Gospel-centeredness as the top priority, organizing principle, and ultimate power in our lives individually and corporately.
- Gospel-centered shepherding is the desire to help people experience and live within the fullness of the Gospel and the privileges that are ours by grace.
- Gospel-centered community (practically expressed in our recent All-In membership process and the ever-increasing understanding of connect group fellowship) as the movement to become a fellowship of people who

are formed not by preferences, tribalism, ethnicity, or common interests but rather by the blood of Jesus, to then love with the love of Jesus.

- Sacred Assembly & Nights of Worship as axiomatic expressions of our collective heart for God and desire to pursue Him with abandonment.
- The understanding—that is now becoming a palpable burden—that since COVID, we are not as evangelistic as we have been historically.

As we combine and integrate all these elements, we envision a multi-year journey that will be a first in the history of our church. What makes this journey unique is that our primary ambition is not numerical, monetary, or programmatic (although these elements will be present to some extent).

Our ambition during this season can best be described by Paul's prayer for the Ephesians—"... *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*" (*Ephesians 3:19*). Everyone is searching for fullness in some form or fashion, and there is no emptiness that God cannot supremely fill with Himself and His plenitude.

This is the power and joy of knowing the Lord as our Shepherd—we literally have no "lack" (*Psalm 23:1*). In fact, we "overflow" as people who bless others—even our enemies!

Our first and persistent goal would be that 100% of us would prayerfully and continually reflect on this question and then follow the Spirit-led paths (along the contours of *Psalm 23*) that are revealed to us.

Goal #1: for 100% of our people to prayerfully ask:

- *Am I realizing & recognizing that God is with me in life-changing, eternity-altering, joy-sustaining ways ... that I am Coram Deo?*

From Scripture, we see three parallel, harmonious, and united paths—like a multi-lane highway—that are effects of the "with God" life. Beneath these paths are the various means of grace that God uses as we move forward by faith and with Him guiding & leading us.

Overview

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We FIND FULLNESS in the fullness of God.

- Path of corporate worship
- Path of communion with Him through His word
- Path of transformation and corresponding love-based obedience to God

We FORGE FELLOWSHIP in the family of God.

- Path of biblical church membership
- Path of community in group life

We FOLLOW JESUS in ministry and mission.

- Path of serving others in the local church and community
- Path of sharing the hope of the Gospel with others around the world
- Path of growing in generosity (time, treasure, and talent)

Primary Goal

We're praying that 100% of us would seriously ask the question, "Am I faithfully living my life *Coram Deo* — realizing that God is with me in life-changing, eternity-altering, and joy-sustaining ways?"

This invites us to live in the fullness of Psalm 23 through three key pursuits: to Find Fullness in the Fullness of God, to Forge Fellowship in the Family of God, and to Follow Jesus on Mission and in Ministry.

Recognizations

As we begin this journey together, we must recognize a few vital elements of the *Coram Deo* life. If we move forward without these in place, we risk foraying into humanism, creating tasks for people rather than seeing transformation in people, and misrepresenting God to others.

God alone is the author of knowledge of Himself and the One Who initiates and catalyzes life with Himself.

We note in Colossians 1:9 that Paul asks God to fill this church with knowledge of His will in spiritual wisdom and understanding. In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is identified as the author and perfecter of our faith.

**These facts alone should position us in humble dependence, expressed in desperate prayerfulness.

The mind and what we turn our minds to are critical components of the “with God” life.

Multiple Scripture references emphasize the importance of turning one's mind to God. Mind renewal (Romans 12:1-2) leads to transformation and a deeper, intimate connection with God.

**Our worship, discipleship, teaching, and intercession cannot neglect this truth.

We acknowledge that discipleship and the journey toward Christ-likeness follow a reliable pattern: Vision-Intention-Means (V-I-M).

Our minds and hearts must be captured by the glorious vision of God and life with Him in His family and as part of His eternal and abundant Kingdom. Then our wills must actually intend to be and become the kind of people who live *Coram Deo* and embody our family likeness to Jesus.

Finally, we use the means (habits or practices) of grace so that what we do flows from what God gives as we devote ourselves to God, train ourselves in godliness, and work out the salvation that He has worked in us.

Above all, we move forward for the glory of God and the love of others.

This is not about us, even though it is for us. We want God's Name to be hallowed and God's love to be known, experienced, and tasted. We can never take this journey and turn it inward on ourselves.



Theological Foundations

The ideas, expressions, and ministry manifestations that emerge from this initiative will be varied and may be amended, modified, and adapted. However, there is a rock beneath all these things that will never change; it is foundational, timeless, and changeless.

This rock is the first biblical, then theological and doctrinal, foundation upon which everything we do stands. It is the changeless and timeless truths that have undergirded the true church and its true members (*Ephesians 2:19-20*). These truths, when released in our individual and corporate experiences, become the power that brings about the new creation and sends forth the church as witnesses (*Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 6:14-15*).

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD: *Who is God and what is His nature?*

- Rock Bridge Belief Statement About God:
 - *God has revealed Himself to be the living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4), perfect in love and righteous in all His ways (Psalm 18:30; Matthew 5:48; 1 John 4:8), one in essence (Ephesians 4:5-6) and eternally existing in the three Persons (or personalities) of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully divine, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:13,14).*
 - Many of us have a faulty, anemic, and/or weightless view or understanding of God. From secularism to poor teaching to life traumas, our view of God is skewed and damaged. Additionally, even long-time Christians can succumb to cheap familiarity with God.
 - **UNDERSTANDING:** God is infinitely joyous, great, powerful, and good. From His abundance, He is overflowing with everything that is good and everything that we need. Life without lack relies upon and comes from Him ... being with Him.
 - Corollary Teachings:
 - *Attributes of God*
 - *The Reality (horrors and tragedies) of Sin*
 - *The Necessity of Being Born Again*
 - *The Nature of True Repentance*

II. UNION LIFE: *Life in Christ*

- Rock Bridge Belief Statement About the Good News
 - *This good news of salvation for sinners comes only through God's saving grace — not human effort — (i.e. no one can be good enough or religious enough) and must be received personally by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as a free gift from God and part of His good purpose (Ephesians 2:4-9; Matthew 4:17; Acts 2:38; Acts 20:21). Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God (Matthew 3:8). Faith is accepting Christ as Savior and trusting Him enough to follow Him as the new and superior leader of one's life ...*
 - *Those who are born again (regenerated believers) have new affections for God and a new ambition to live for Him (Ezekiel 36:26; Matthew 22:37-39; I John 2:15; I John 3:9-10; Titus 2:11-14). This begins the process of sanctification by which the believer is progressively changed into Christ-likeness (Romans 6:22, 8:29; Colossians 3:10). The believer is enabled by the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit to walk in a growing relationship with the living God (Galatians 5:25), to cultivate Christian character (2 Peter 1:5-7), and to serve Christ and His Church through spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:4-6). All true believers persevere to the end of the age, being kept by the power of God through faith (Mark 13:13; I Corinthians 15:1-2; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 3:14; Jude 24).*
- A significant challenge in the church is the temptation (and deception) to minimize what it means to be adopted into the family of God and to fail to see new life in Christ as the glorious and dignified reality that it is. Consequently, we live beneath or below our privileges as sons and daughters of God. Additionally, either through legalism or antinomianism, the understanding of God's law and commandments is diminished, with similar consequences: we live less than lives that enjoy less of God and know less of His transformative power.
- UNDERSTANDING: *As Christians, we are united to Christ. We are "in Christ."*
 - This is the foundation of all our spiritual experience and blessing (Eph. 1:3-14).
 - We are taken out of ourselves and our sin and are now found "in Christ," so that all that is His becomes ours through faith.

Theological Foundations

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- * His self-offering → ours to bring us pardon
- * His life of obedience → ours to impute righteousness
- * His power → ours to affect transformation
 - » Our sinful past and present sinful tendencies do not have to dominate our current lives.
- COROLLARY TEACHINGS:
 - *Baptism* ... (see Romans 6)
 - *The Lord's Supper* (see separate section)
 - *Adoption*
 - *The Christian and the laws/commands of God*
 - *Justification & Sanctification* (truth of each and connection to one another)
 - *The Christian's Conflicts and Crucifying of Sin*
 - *The Holy Spirit*

III. ECCLESIOLOGY: Life in fellowship with our spiritual family

- Rock Bridge Belief Statement About the Church
 - *Regenerated believers become members of God's eternal and universal church (Romans 12:5), a living spiritual body of which Christ is the Head (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:15-16).*
 - *The local church is a unified and organized community of regenerated believers (Acts 6:1-7; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17; I Thess. 5:12-13) seeking to love God and one another by obeying the His Word (Colossians 3:12-17; I Timothy 4:13), yielding to His Spirit (Acts 13:1-4), and making Him known to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; I Peter 2:9).*
- Many of us suffer from a minimalist understanding of, and therefore, experience of, church life. This understanding is further ingrained into people by our individualistic, often anti-authority, and increasingly tribalistic culture. Additionally, experiences of church hurt can further push people away from the fellowship God intends for His children.
- **UNDERSTANDING: The Church is one of the great privileges and**

responsibilities of the Christ-follower. As the church, we belong to one another as a family, and we demonstrate and display His Kingdom. Through the church, we receive grace to support our sanctification and our perseverance in the faith.

- Ephesians 3:8-11; 4:1-16; Hebrews 10:24-25
- COROLLARY TEACHINGS:
 - *The Lord's Supper*
 - *Church membership, leadership (eldership, deacons)*
 - *Fellowship as a means of healing & restoration*
 - *Corporate worship; What is worship?*

IV. THE LORD'S SUPPER: The “Supper-Sign”/visible word to the family of God.

- Rock Bridge Belief Statement About the Lord's Supper:
 - *The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience where He is spiritually present through faith. This act illustrates the death of Christ and its benefits to believers, strengthens their faith and unity, and anticipates the second coming of Christ (I Corinthians 11:23-29; I Corinthians 10:16-18).*
- As an overreaction to the Catholic teaching of transubstantiation, many Protestants, with a minimalist understanding, have adopted a ritualistic practice of the Lord's Supper. From the primarily Baptistic doctrine of “memorialism” to infrequent observances, the Lord's Supper has been dangerously diminished in contemporary protestant congregational life while being erroneously taught in Catholicism.
- UNDERSTANDING: *The Lord's Supper (like baptism) is a visible word and, like the audible (preaching & taught) word, is used by the Holy Spirit to show Christ and nurture faith in Him. It is a significant reminder of multiple realities & privileges and means of grace to experience His with-ness afresh by faith.*
 - The Lord's Supper helps communicate the union of life, strengthens unity and community within the church family, and reveals the nature and provisions of God for His people.
 - In many ways, the “Supper-sign” visibly teaches, reminds, refreshes, and strengthens the truth, reality, and blessing of God's with-ness ... that we are *Coram Deo*.

Coram Deo Initiatives

Thus far, what has been described are essentially the unwavering and non-negotiable truths of biblical Christianity and the founding vision and values of RBCC, coupled with tensions that have long existed among God's people.

Now, we turn to the new applications, new trajectories, new depths, new methods, and innovations that we envision. These are *new applications of the old*.

In the early days of Rock Bridge, we stated that while we would never alter the “message,” we would always be open to revising our “methods.” This is the “spirit” of our initiatives. The framework of these initiatives stems from the *Coram Deo* vision, which encompasses the three effects and outworkings of the “with God” life, as well as its theological foundations.

FINDING FULLNESS IN THE FULLNESS OF GOD

ENGAGEMENT IN GOSPEL-CENTERED WORSHIP

We have always recognized the power and importance of our weekly corporate gatherings. The corporate experience of worship, along with its potential for connection, evangelism, and discipleship, lends this part of church life incredible power and potential.

Currently, we are discerning the following needs and opportunities within our corporate worship setting:

- More defined liturgy that is shaped by the Gospel.
- More defined response time for people to linger with the Lord and respond in step with His Spirit.
- More intentional use of varied and creative worship elements to first adorn the Gospel and second engage worshippers.
- More dedicated and united time in prayer for the effects of the Spirit upon our worship services.

FULLER OBSERVANCES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

This means of grace directly and powerfully reinforces the *Coram Deo* life as well as our understanding and experience of God's fullness, of fellowship within His family, and of following Jesus to give and go sacrificially (because of His sufficiency to us).

We are discerning that we need to “level up” our current practice and observance of the Lord’s Supper, and to provide more and expanded teaching on this essential ordinance.

- The way we come to and observe the Lord’s Supper needs to be consistent with its significance.
- Incorporating the biblical and historic aspects of the Lord’s Supper into our observances of it.
- Expanding the practical ways in which we observe the Lord’s Supper.
- Ensuring the environment in which the Lord’s Supper is observed conveys the meaning of the Supper.

COUNSELING AND INTERCESSION:

There are some hurts, habits, and hang-ups that we can’t overcome without the wisdom, love, and support from others. We envision offering a robust counseling ministry to all Rock Bridgers and, eventually, serving as a resource to our communities.

We believe this could require additional square footage (lease, purchase, renovation) that allows us to meet felt needs and help others experience the freedom and fullness that God offers.

We also envision expanding intercessory prayer throughout our church, seeking healing, forgiveness, and favor from God.

YOUNG ADULTS:

Barna research indicates a significant trend of students leaving their faith in college, with figures showing up to 70% of Christian high schoolers lose their faith by college end. Additionally, 64% of young adults (18-29) with a Christian background are withdrawing from church.

There is a great need to share the Gospel and provide discipleship opportunities for young adults after high school. We envision developing a young adult ministry with the necessary resources (and potential staffing) to help this generation find fullness in God across all of our communities.

Coram Deo Initiatives

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FORGING FELLOWSHIP IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

INTENSIFY DISCIPLE-MAKING

We aspire to continue evaluating and improving our intentional efforts to make disciples of Christ throughout Rock Bridge.

We are grateful that by God's grace, the "infrastructure" and "understanding" of discipleship within RBCC are stronger and clearer. However, we also want to deepen discipleship efforts in the following ways:

- Having 300 Connect Group opportunities (across RBCC) for adults, and at least 85% of Rock Bridgers participating in group life.
- We envision calling a full-time staff member to oversee discipleship throughout RBCC.
- Launching a second discipleship environment (after All In) meant to equip new members in foundational elements of our faith (spiritual habits, how to read the Bible, etc.) and learn more about RBCC beliefs.
- Ensure First Wednesday aligns with and amplifies *Coram Deo* by:
 - Providing a time for fellowship and connection during a meal at all of our First Wednesday environments.
 - Launching a discipleship environment for kids (birth - 5th grade) that helps them grow in their faith.
- Promoting and prioritizing Scripture memorization across all of Rock Bridge. From Connect Groups discussion guides, to "Daily Habits" (on the app), to the weekly bulletin. We want to grow as disciples who treasure God's Word even more!

MID-SIZED GATHERINGS:

We know that sometimes it is just great to be together with others pursuing a shared interest, a season of life, or a common hobby, and that God uses these as catalysts for ongoing friendship and fellowship. We see this as an excellent opportunity to forge fellowship and increase our gospel impact.

- We envision fully developing environments that help people grow as disciples and connect with others in meaningful ways.

- These environments will provide “on-ramp” opportunities for those who have yet to engage with life at RBCC.

MARRIAGE MINISTRY:

We see the power, purpose, and potential of biblical marriage and aspire to be more intentional in helping people prepare for marriage, maintain strong marriages, and overcome problems in marriage. We want to invest in marriage by:

- Launching a marriage ministry that supports and serves all Rock Bridgers and our communities.
- Hosting marriage events (date nights, conferences, equipping classes) that strengthen healthy marriages and serve those in crisis.
- Raising “marriage mentors” at all campuses who will disciple, encourage, and support RBCC couples.

EQUIPPING LEADERS AS GOSPEL-CENTERED SHEPHERDS

We recognize the opportunity to continue developing our staff, elders, group and team leaders, and members. From the E⁴ (enlist, equip, empower, encourage) handlebar to gospel-centered shepherding, we have increased our understanding of ministry service. Now we see an opportunity to expand and improve our application of this understanding in the following ways:

- Assess the current training of all connect group leaders, connect group coaches, ministry team leaders, and volunteers to identify areas for improvement and how to better align with the goals of *Coram Deo*.
- Connecting church elders more intentionally to discipleship and shepherding within the local congregation (All-In process; Connect Group coaching and support, etc.).

FOLLOWING JESUS IN MINISTRY AND MISSION

MORE BLESSED TO GIVE

Jesus clearly has a lot to say about money, which can only mean that money is a significant part of the “with God” life and being His disciple.

Coram Deo Initiatives

(continued)

Rock Bridge has been blessed throughout our history by extraordinary acts of generosity; however, our discipleship efforts in stewardship have been inconsistent and sporadic. Therefore, we see opportunities for improvement and growth by:

- Consistent teaching and equipping in the area of generosity.
 - *Sermon series that teaches on generosity and living the “with God” life in the area of finances.*
 - *Specific Connect Groups that help people live in financial freedom.*
- **TWO45 (giving of alms):** Serving our church and community by demonstrating the love of Christ, through helping meet practical needs. This will be an opportunity for RBCC to bless others more intentionally when we gather.
- **Acts 2:45: And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.**
- Having 1000 first-time givers at RBCC grow as disciples by beginning their generosity journey.
- Increase our annual giving by one million dollars (two million dollars total) to advance the Gospel, make disciples, impact our communities, and to (by God's grace) help as many people as possible live *Coram Deo*.

SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY:

We understand that 1 in 6 kids have developmental challenges, and we see an opportunity to build bridges and serve the needs of these kids and their families. We envision developing special needs classrooms and ministries in all our physical locations.

ENVIRONMENT ALIGNMENT

Our environment is a combination of the appearance and layout of our physical spaces, the mindsets and attitudes we hold and exhibit, and the language we use on a routine basis.

We see multiple opportunities for our environment to align, support, and reinforce *Coram Deo*.

- Level up our lobby spaces to reinforce *Coram Deo* paths and practices.

- Reassess the language we use to discern alignment and potential improvement, believing that expression and repetition communicate vision and mission.
 - Expand love God, love others, & live sent into the three paths that more intentionally communicate the Rock Bridge mission:
 - Love God → **Finding fullness in the fullness of God**
 - Love Others → **Forging fellowship in the family of God**
 - Live Sent → **Following Jesus on ministry and mission**
 - Additionally, we will rename:
 - Bridge Builder to **Serve Team** for better alignment with the vision of God's purpose for His people in serving and making a difference.
 - Small Groups to **Connect Groups** for better alignment with the goals of fellowship and connection.
- We envision equipping 500 new Serve Team members throughout RBCC.

REINVIGORATE MISSIONAL LIVING ACROSS RBCC:

Our understanding of ourselves as God's missionary people is central to God's purpose for us and His power at work in us, so we "go" as His "sent ones."

In recognition of our own tendency to drift away from personal evangelism and missional postures, we will be intentional about equipping RBCC to live with Jesus in ministry and mission both locally and globally.

- We will accomplish this within our communities by:
 - **Launching a second Spanish congregation.** Our Spanish congregation in Dalton has been one of our fastest-growing congregations. We believe God is leading RBCC to start a second Spanish service in another community
 - Strengthening our H.O.P.E. partnerships at all campuses and exploring strategic partnerships that align with our mission
 - Providing 2-3 Serve Days throughout the year to serve our communities

Coram Deo Initiatives

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- Ensuring 100% of Connect Groups are equipped (trained and resourced) to share their faith and invite others to be part of RBCC
- Globally, we are committed to raising awareness, giving generously, and sending teams to serve our mission partners as we (together) share the hope of the Gospel. A few ways that we will accomplish this are:
 - **Mission Grounds:** Our coffee areas will highlight RBCC partnerships, and the proceeds from selling coffee beans (and grounds) will go to a global partner.
 - **For All Mankind Movement (FAMM):** FAMM raises and equips leaders and sends them out as missionaries to their own people. We will partner with FAMM to raise local leaders who will then share the Good News of Jesus with people in a region of India who have never heard the Gospel.
 - **Compassion International:** Partnering with Compassion International to help launch a brand-new Compassion Center. Compassion partners with a locally established evangelical church in the community that is ready to make a profound difference in the lives of children in the surrounding community. Children will experience holistic care at this child development center. This local church will be able to open its doors to children in need, offering discipleship, education, health support, and the hope of Christ.

Next Steps

We strongly believe in the vision and mission of RBCC that the Lord gave us in 2002. We are discerning that the *Coram Deo* ambition, and these Fresh Initiatives are new reflections of faithfulness to the Lord, and with that faithfulness, we long for, pray for, and expect fruitfulness beyond what we can even imagine!

Would you:

- **Pray:** First, we want to come before the Lord humbly, seek His face, and ask for wisdom and courage as He reveals more of Himself and His will to us as His church. We have spent months praying, meeting, and discerning what He would want for RBCC in this season. While we are grateful for the clarity and direction He has given our leaders, we know that transformation, life-change, and *Coram Deo* only happen by His grace.
- **Ask yourself these questions:**
 - Am I realizing and recognizing that God is with me in life-changing, eternity-altering, and joy-sustaining ways?
 - Am I living life, *Coram Deo* ... before the face of God?
- Regardless of your answer, our hope and prayer is that you would experience the depth of His love, care, and fullness in your life (Ephesians 3:17-19).
- **Say YES:** Say yes to what God has in store for you and for us! This book is filled with content that speaks to RBCC's vision and mission, as well as to the goals we believe God has called us to as a church. However, *Coram Deo* is not about goals and measuring impact. It is a discipleship journey that He is calling us to.

In conclusion, the opening line of Psalm 23 in Latin is “*Dominus regit me*,” which equates to “May the Lord rule over me!” Perhaps that captures our ultimate prayer and hope for our church, because life under His reign is the life we are made for and redeemed to, and it is indeed a life without want.

The best is yet to come, so let's begin!

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