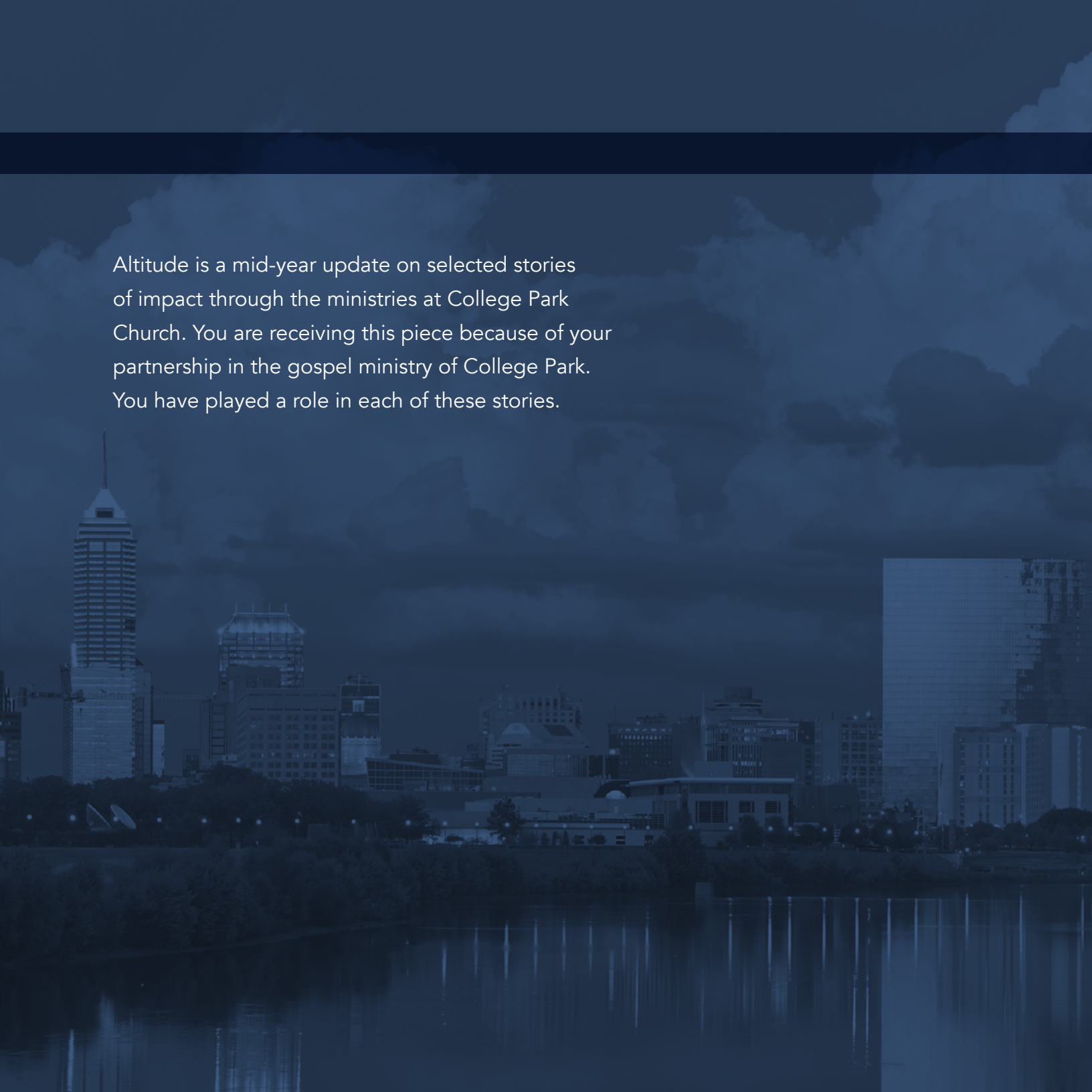


# Altitude

Stories of Impact 2022



Altitude is a mid-year update on selected stories of impact through the ministries at College Park Church. You are receiving this piece because of your partnership in the gospel ministry of College Park. You have played a role in each of these stories.

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Pre-eminence of Jesus

# Healthcare Professionals Post-Pandemic

By Kristen Vroegop

“I think what the church is doing to create a space for us to commune and talk through the nuanced challenges we face at work is exactly what we need.”



For many people, the workplace can be a difficult place to follow Jesus. For healthcare professionals, though, the workplace has uniquely shifted over the past three years, becoming a particularly demanding and isolating line of work due to the pandemic.

This past March during THINK122: Whatever We Do, College Park provided rich biblical teaching focused on living for Jesus in the workplace, including breakout groups for attendees in various professions. Grouping people by their profession enabled attendees to find support, encouragement, and relationship with those who understand the unique challenges of following Jesus in their particular field.

Those who attended the healthcare breakout felt especially blessed by their session. In fact, for the church to provide a space for those in this challenging field to share, process, and gain insight on their experiences at work was life-giving for many.

“The THINK conference helped me to be reminded that my vocation is a calling, and that I should view it as an avenue of gifting that the Lord has tasked me with not just something I do to earn a living,” says Hayden Vroegop, an ICU nurse at Eskenazi.

This harkens to the driving concept of this year's THINK conference: honoring God with whatever he has called us to do. As the medical profession has faced particular adversity over the past few years, these believers were heartened by the opportunity to engage with and learn from others who share both their burdens and zeal in the vocation the Lord has called them to.

The impact of the THINK conference's medical breakout session was so great that it has since expanded into more regular meetings for those who work in healthcare. Since the conference, College Park has held luncheons for medical professionals to further cultivate community.

"There was such a great response to the THINK breakout session and a clear desire for more gatherings that we decided to meet again," explains Brad Merchant, Pastor of Theological Development. "We wanted to hear about ways we can serve this special group of people and to create a space for new relationships to be formed among medical workers in our church."

This church-built community has even extended into specific workplaces, providing space for this body of believers to directly care for and support one another while at work. "Since the conference, I have had several people in my workplace come up to me and introduce themselves as College Parkers," reports Hayden. "It has been helpful to

recognize that there are other believers around me while I work, and we can begin to grow a networked community of Christian support within our workplace."

As we move into a post-pandemic world, we do not leave these past three years behind us. Our brothers and sisters in the medical field have been encouraged by the support and space that College Park has provided for them as they move forward into this new era. "I think what the church is doing to create a space for us to commune and talk through the nuanced challenges we face at work is exactly what we need," Hayden explains. "There are many unique challenges that we face as Christian healthcare professionals, but I am excited about the opportunity to see how we can support each other going forward."

To learn more about the healthcare professionals group, visit [yourchurch.com/healthcare](https://yourchurch.com/healthcare).

"It has been helpful to recognize that there are other believers around me while I work, and we can begin to grow a networked community of Christian support within our workplace."








Authority of the Word

# I Am a Good Creation

By Jodi Harvey

“It was our hope and prayer to spend intentional time discussing the topic of body image, asking God to open eyes to his truth.”





It was a cool April morning in Carmel in a cozy home ready with muffins, quiche, flowers, and the ever-popular coffee bar. Couches had been pushed aside in the living room, and chatter began to fill the space. This was the stage set for our first-ever High School Girls Breakout, where a group of thirty-some high school girls and a few small group leaders gathered for a special time of learning and discussion.

Many of you have teenage girls in your lives, whether daughters or granddaughters or babysitters or family friends. You may already be familiar with their struggles with anxiety and perfectionism or the fallout from a life heavily influenced by social media. What you might not know is that body image struggles are a big deal.

Culture is shaping girls everywhere they turn, and they are learning to see their bodies as the world does. It was our hope and prayer to spend intentional time discussing the topic of body image, asking God to open eyes to his truth.

With girls gathered in the living room and quite literally piled on couches, we began to talk about our bodies, looking at God's Word and what he has to say about body image. Our time was spent digging into the Bible and then applying what we read to each of our struggles through personal journaling pages.

We read Genesis 1:22 (MSG), "God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good," and Psalm 139:13-14, "I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation!"

Then we looked at how God views our bodies—I am a good creation—and compared that to our own view of our bodies. We acknowledged that our view is broken because of the fall and our own sin and that we are each touched by this brokenness in various ways: illness, disabilities, pride, or comparison, to name just a few. Whether we know it or not, we see our bodies through these broken lenses.

Finally, we asked, considering all of this, "How do we live?" Romans 12:1 tells us how! "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering." We talked about all the ways we use our bodies in this life: sports, schoolwork, beauty routines, and social media. We talked about practical ways we can make life choices regarding our bodies that bring worship to him and not to ourselves and how we can join David the psalmist in saying, "I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration!" (Ps. 139:13-14).

In a way that only the Holy Spirit can move, we saw immediate fruit—praise God! The Spirit settled over that living room full of girls in a beautiful way. They listened, they laughed, they questioned, and, yes, there were some tears. Looking around the room, surrounded by girls so wonderfully made by God, it was clear: This matters. This matters so much.

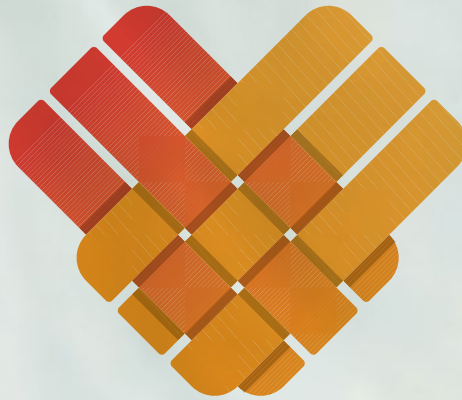
Each teen left our brunch that day rocking a spectacular pair of pink heart sunglasses. (Chances are, you may be able to spot us out and about!) But these sunglasses are not just for show. They represent the lenses we are choosing to wear each day. With God's help, we choose to see ourselves through his eyes—created good, our bodies made to bring him worship. And so, when we face the mirror or grab our sunglasses and head out the door, we are all learning to say, "I am a good creation."

To learn more about Student Ministries, visit [yourchurch.com/students](https://yourchurch.com/students).

"With God's help, we choose to see ourselves through his eyes—created good, our bodies made to bring him worship."







FAMILY ADVOCACY  
MINISTRY

Redemptive Community

# A Picture of the Gospel

By Angela McColgin

“I was ready to throw in the towel. But God used people in the church to give me wings and remind me that with his help I can do hard things.”



Since they were first married, Rebekah and Nathan Elliott had discussed caring for vulnerable children, possibly through adopting internationally. After having three biological children, they felt it was time to consider adding to their family through international adoption. Upon looking further into that option, though, they sensed God closing the door. In response, their conversations turned to the possibility of caring for vulnerable children as foster parents.

One Sunday morning, a sermon based on the book of James spurred them to action. “I remember Pastor Mark saying that caring for widows and orphans looks different for each family,” says Rebekah, “and I knew that for us it meant becoming foster parents.”

Four months later, the Elliotts welcomed two children into their home, a set of siblings ages twelve months and two years old. “Shortly after our first placement started, I panicked,” Rebekah says. “I remember thinking we’d had this perfect little life and that life had been good. What had we done? I was ready to throw in the towel. But God used people in the church to give me wings and remind me that with his help I can do hard things.”

People surrounded the Elliotts with tangible love and care by bringing meals, providing funds for



grocery deliveries, and offering child care so Rebekah and Nathan could have weekly date nights. Family and friends even went through the approval process so they could watch the couple's foster children overnight.

"We had a group of family and friends who provided weekend respite for us once a month," Rebekah explains. "Team Elliott would be able to reconnect on those weekends, and those were really powerful times for us as we worked to include these two precious children into our family dynamic."

Not only did people wrap around the Elliotts and meet their needs, but College Park friends also found ways to bring redemptive community to the biological mom of their foster children.

"It was cool to watch people step in with the children's mom," explains Rebekah. "They were sending gift cards, sending clothes, sending baby gear. [Someone] sent a gift card along with a clear and loving gospel message about fresh starts. Mom was pretty floored by how many people reached out and poured into her."

After seven months, the Elliotts' foster children were reunited with their mom, and today—eight months later—the Elliotts still continue to be a part of their lives.

"By having these kiddos and getting to know their mom, and now their dad, it doesn't feel like a service or a ministry anymore," Rebekah explains. "We want to be loving them, praying for them, helping them. This experience has knit us together in a special way."

She says that in the beginning "the unknown was so frightening and hard. I just wanted to know how long they were going to be with us. I had to learn to trust God and be okay with not knowing the ending of the story."

"I never would have made it alone. I'm so thankful that God gave us the church. People being generous and helping us and someone they'll never know. It made the gospel so beautiful and tangible, and I know it was God behind it all."

To learn more about the Family Advocacy Ministry, visit [yourchurch.com/fam](https://yourchurch.com/fam).

"I never would have made it alone. I'm so thankful that God gave us the church."

ARE FAMILY

I ♥ MY CHUR



Biblical Unity in Diversity

# Woven Together in Love

By Laverne Thompson

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony”  
(Col. 3:14, ESV).



One of College Park's Core Values is Biblical Unity in Diversity. We want to reflect the unified beauty of Father, Son, and Spirit by participating in the building of the multifaceted kingdom of our triune God. We are committed to such diversity in our theological systems, our ministry forms, and our personal relationships.

It was through this Core Value that a group of College Park women with unique backgrounds came together in pursuit of biblical unity in diversity, seeking to learn what it truly means to listen to one another, to lean into each other's pain, and to weep together—lamenting and linking arms.

The vision for this group, named Woven, should sound familiar. John 13:34-35 says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."

Unfortunately, even within our church walls, we sometimes fail to love one another as commanded in Scripture. And, too often, there's a disconnect between representation and engagement of our members of different ethnicities.

This gap was particularly noted by our Black sisters. The Women's Ministries leadership team, under the direction of Karen Pourcho, recognized

this gap and conducted a sample assessment by speaking to several of these women. The findings were difficult to hear and not readily understood.

During this time, Pastor Mark's new book, *Weep With Me*, was released. As I read it, it helped realign my heart, restore my hope, and recover my voice to re-engage. I knew I was struggling and that others were as well, so I began to speak about my struggles with the hope of both finding and offering encouragement.

One of the people I spoke to was a new friend who I found out serves on the Women's Ministries leadership team. As a result of these conversations, a few of us joined together to develop a forum in which women could build intentional relationships, growing and caring for one another in such a way that the command and truth of John 13:34-35 could become our testimony! We became the leadership team of Woven; and after digging deep together during the summer of 2021, we launched the first official Woven group that fall. God raised up sixteen women to meet weekly, to work together through his Word, and to listen to one another's stories.

It has been a beautiful gift to help lead the dynamic, collaborative women who form Woven. One of my unique roles involves developing the content and framework for our dialogue, leveraging the book *Weep With Me* as context.

We didn't know what to expect or how things would go in a roomful of women with different backgrounds and experiences. But we had hope, and we walked in the faith of who Jesus had called us to be, united together in him. Our hope was that Woven would be a step towards developing care and concern for one another that eclipsed our own personal discomforts, where we would live in a way that we could truly call one another sisters and were known and loved in this body of believers. And it has been exactly that!

Woven uniquely serves to live out biblical unity in diversity and to help bridge the gap, in what can feel like a cultural chasm, by intentionally creating a space for College Park women to reach out to one another with the love and grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Themed around Colossians 3:14, Woven's objective is not to solve social injustices, but rather to strive together in Christ in the midst of our circumstances. We know we need the help of Christ to live together in harmony—that we cannot do it apart from him!

The pursuit of biblical unity in diversity that leads to racial harmony is the work of every Christian—no matter what their ethnicity may be. It's hard work. But I want to be a part of this gospel work to the glory of God.



The experience has been both life-giving and difficult in beautiful ways. The women of the group are fragile, yet resilient and strong. I did not anticipate the contagious nature of the level of care and encouragement that arose, both inside and outside of the group. The women did not quit or give up on one another. We experienced what it can look like to bear one another's burdens and to bear with one another when it would be easier to walk away. I have been inspired by these women.

For me, there's nothing outside of Jesus that feels safe in this work. But he is ever leading, loving, and caring for us, and as we follow his example, I am refreshed and compelled to do likewise. I want to be found woven and bound in his love with all of my brothers and sisters in Christ.

*To learn more about Woven, visit [yourchurch.com/womens](https://yourchurch.com/womens).*





Extravagant Grace

# One Family

By Jill Henry

“Jeff and Joanne call this special community a ‘family.’ They do life with each other.”



A group of College Park brothers and sisters exist who are often overlooked by our culture—and, unfortunately, by some who pass them by on a Sunday morning. These beautiful friends live with various special needs. But while our culture too often devalues the lives of those with physical and intellectual differences, our God sees them with the same value, dignity, and worth as you and me. Because they too have been created in his image.

Ginny Schaefer, now at home with the Lord, also believed in the value, dignity, and worth of these people. With a fifteen-year background in working with children with special needs, Ginny was burdened to find a way to also serve special needs adults. So, in 1990, she began leading a Bible study for adults living at the New Hope Center here in Indianapolis. It was Ginny's vision and College Park's desire to demonstrate that people with severe special needs can come to know the Lord and serve in a local church body.

In 1995, due to New Hope's restructuring, the adults they served were moved to other group homes around the city. Having members in various homes opened the opportunity to minister to even more adults with special needs. That created a greater need for volunteers, as what had started as a weekly Bible study turned into bringing the adults to church on Sundays through the provision of a wheelchair-accessible van. In 1996, church member Jeff Alexovich was recruited to serve and then to lead the ministry.

Jeff's wife, Joanne, joined him in this endeavor. Their love for their special needs friends grew, as did the need for more Bible study opportunities for the growing community. In 2011, Bethesda Lutheran Ministries asked if College Park would host a SonRise Bible Study for special needs adults. The answer was "Yes!", and in May of this year, SonRise Bible Study celebrated its eleventh year of ministry at College Park!

Today this College Park ministry for our special needs friends is more than just a weekly Bible study. Jeff and Joanne call this special community a "family." They do life with each other just like most families, celebrating birthdays, attending the symphony, going on a Fourth of July outing to see fireworks, journeying to see Bethesda's Living Christmas Tree, and enjoying a hayride every fall.

Unfortunately, COVID was hard on both the transportation and the Bible study ministry. Jeff and Joanne continued to keep in touch with their "family" with visits on the holidays, and they encouraged livestreaming for Sunday morning church. They also restarted their Truth Seekers Sunday School class via Zoom.

New Hope of Indiana approached them in the summer of 2020, as it became clear this pandemic was lasting longer than anyone had thought it would, and asked if they would present

a weekday Bible study. Since Jeff works full time, he could not, but another volunteer faithfully led a Bible study via Zoom each week through that summer and the following year.

The SonRise Bible Study was able to start meeting in person again in September 2021. While COVID has affected the number of volunteers and participants who are able to be involved, the love and joy of our special needs friends has not dimmed. Recently, two of them, Nikki and Cindy, started serving on Sunday mornings as greeters! If you don't see them at one of the doors, then you're sure to spot them in the front row worshipping with everything in them, right along with everyone else!

Over the years as Jeff and Joanne have led this ministry, they've learned how easy it is to be in friendship and service to this special community. The extravagant grace the Lord has poured out on us compels the volunteers in this ministry to serve them as not only friends, but to love them deeply as family.

*To learn more about Special Needs Ministry, visit [yourchurch.com/specialneeds](http://yourchurch.com/specialneeds).*

*"They've learned how easy it is to be in friendship and service to this special community."*






The Call to Go!

# Building Bridges of Grace Day by Day

By Evan Collister

“Maybe, just maybe, we don’t give enough credit to the small, yet crucial, opportunities we have every day to engage our neighbors with the love of Christ.”



If you stand in the center of the atrium or walk up the ramp from the Children’s Ministries wing and look halfway up the north wall, you’ll see six crucial statements that summarize how we as a church family are living out our mission of igniting a passion to follow Jesus. These six statements are College Park’s Core Values. They’re derived from Scripture, and they declare the ways in which we strive to follow, serve, and glorify God.

As you read from left to right, at the very end you’ll find “The Call to Go!” As followers of Jesus, working together, we believe and declare that “All of us are called to be Spirit-empowered catalysts for life change in our areas of personal influence. . . While the body of Christ is made up of a variety of gifts, the calling is the same: GO!”

If we’re honest, this is a sobering and sometimes daunting value to live out. For some of us, the thought of engaging our neighbors and co-workers with the truth and love of Jesus Christ can be scary. In a world that feels on edge and in which conflict arises so easily, it may seem safer to disengage rather than engage with our community. Even as a pastor with two degrees and years of full-time vocational ministry experience, I confess that I still get scared when it comes to evangelistic opportunities.

But could it be that we place too much pressure on ourselves to initiate “big” evangelistic

moments with our non-Christian neighbors? Maybe, just maybe, we don’t give enough credit to the small, yet crucial, opportunities we have every day to engage our neighbors with the love of Christ. You know what they are—the wave to a neighbor as you pull out of your driveway, the ten-second interaction while grabbing coffee in the breakroom, or the two-minute conversation at the sidewalk while mowing your lawn.

Recently, my friend Robert DeBruin has shown me just how important these moments are. Robert and his wife, Marty, have been members of College Park since the mid-nineties and have served as missionaries with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) for the last twenty-five years, including ten years in the Middle East. After returning home to Indianapolis in 2019, Marty continued serving remotely with CEF, while Robert retired and has been focused on engaging his neighbors.

Throughout the week, you’ll find Robert doing odd jobs around the neighborhood, such as pulling weeds or helping neighbors with home repairs. Every Thursday morning, he joyfully returns all thirty to forty trash carts from the community’s central roundabout to his neighbors’ doors (something that each neighbor would usually do themselves). This winter, he started a thirty-minute monthly prayer meeting with several believers in the neighborhood who are



from a few different churches. He shares the love of Jesus with his neighbors through simple, yet meaningful, ways!

Then earlier this summer, Robert saw a unique opportunity to engage all 180-plus homes within their community. Their local pool, in disrepair for over a year, had been rebuilt this spring with the hope of opening by Memorial Day weekend. Robert saw this reopening as a way to bring the entire community together! So, he, along with his monthly prayer group, and a few others from the neighborhood joined together to put on an event they called “Meet, Greet & Eat!”

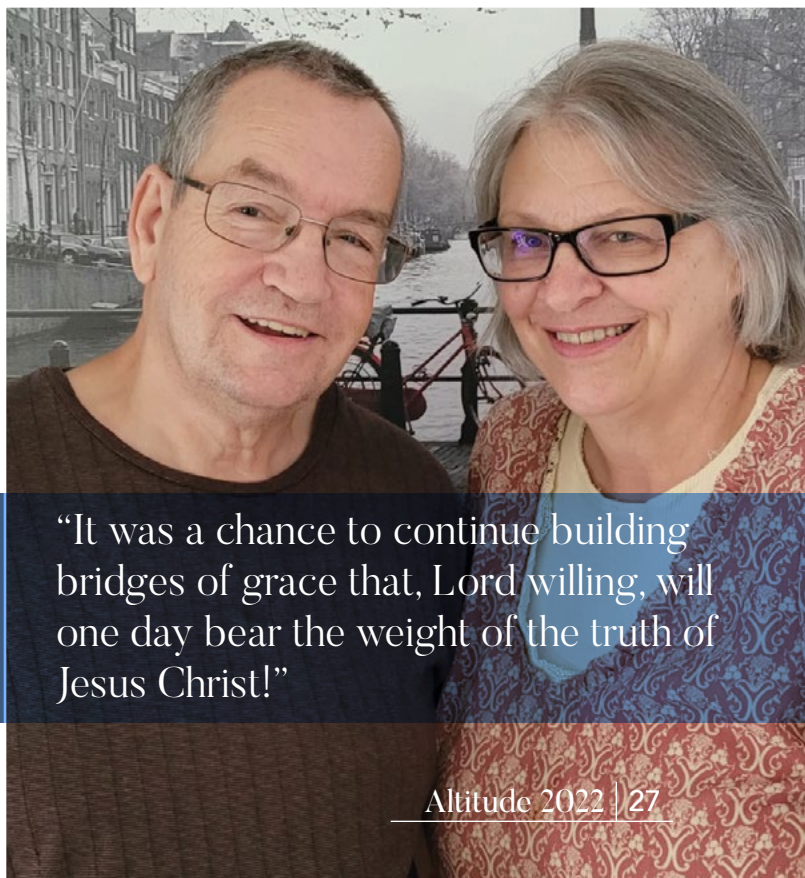
They designed a two-hour lunch event in the pool’s parking lot, with Chick-fil-A sandwiches, bags of chips, cookies, a fun ice-breaker game, and plenty of time to meet neighbors. The team, along with other community members, pitched in to buy the food, and they asked a College Park friend with graphic design skills to create a flyer and poster. With a couple posts on the community’s social media page, hanging flyers on trash carts and front doors, and a poster out front, they got the word out.

When the day arrived, they were met with beautiful sunny weather, a nice warm temperature, and sixty members of the community who came out to enjoy the food and fun!

This event wasn’t a “big” evangelistic moment, but it provided a great opportunity to connect with neighbors and care for them with a meal. It was a chance to continue building bridges of grace that, Lord willing, will one day bear the weight of the truth of Jesus Christ!

While reflecting on the event, Robert shares, “What I’ve done, anybody can do. Anybody can pull a trash cart; anybody can walk around and put an invitation on a door.”

To learn more about Local Outreach, visit [yourchurch.com/localoutreach](http://yourchurch.com/localoutreach).



“It was a chance to continue building bridges of grace that, Lord willing, will one day bear the weight of the truth of Jesus Christ!”

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# Igniting a Passion to Follow Jesus



COLLEGE PARK CHURCH