

LOVE | LIVE | SERVE



GATEWAYCHURCH DOWNTOWN

A Letter from the Pastor

Dear Gateway family and friends,

You're probably reading this a bit hungover from our "spring forward" into Daylight Saving Time. Sorry about that! I'm sure the politicians are on their biannual, populist platform of doing away with the time change, which will likely go nowhere. Is there anything more befitting our times than watching politicians agree that action is needed on a non-partisan issue that would be immediately popular while they bumble any attempt to carry that legislation across the finish line? Let us do good in this world while we can, but not lose sight of the fact that our hope is in Jesus!

There are a couple things to keep your eye on this month:

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE. Have you ever felt stuck when reading the Bible? Ever felt like you weren't quite sure what you were supposed to be doing in your devotional time? Do you ever feel like you're reading just to read? "How to Study the Bible" is the first offering of our revamped Sunday seminars. Starting on April 7, we'll spend 6 weeks with a hands-on approach to reading, understanding, and applying the Bible to your life in a way that feeds your soul. These are valuable skills and insights no matter where you're at in your Bible reading journey.

MEMBERS' MEETING. We have our next members' meeting on March 17 at 1:00 PM. Keep in mind the St. Patrick's Day Parade will start at 12:30 PM, which may impact traffic patterns. Check your inbox for

the potluck sign-up, or click [here](#).

If you're curious about membership, we offer a short membership course that we designed to be valuable whether or not a person joins our church. You can find more details and [register your interest in the course here](#). We'll find a time that works for your schedule!

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE. We will have a service of worship and reflection on the death of Jesus Christ on March 29 at 6:30 PM. We hope and believe this time will encourage you as you deepen your understanding of the Christian message, which is the Gospel.

TGC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE. A few women from Gateway have signed up for the TGC Women's Conference June 20-22 in Indianapolis, and they'd love to have you join them (assuming you're a woman)! This year's theme is "[Behold and Believe: Encountering Jesus As the Great I Am](#)" and features incredible teachers like Melissa Kruger, Jen Wilkin, Nancy Guthrie, and David Platt. There are a ton of breakout sessions on so many incredible topics, I couldn't narrow down a few to highlight. You'll just have to [check for yourself](#)! If you're interested, talk with Lizz Most or Sarah Schwab about travel and lodging. If you are worried about costs, reach out to an elder about how we can help get you there.

May you be blessed with [all the riches in Christ](#),

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris".

Love. Live. Serve

[Heads up! As an indirect follow-up to last month's newsletter, March 19th is an election day for most of us, and not just a primary election. I have no desire to tell you how to vote, but I think it is generally good that Christians do vote. Get a [sample ballot](#) and find your [voting location!](#)]

There's a total eclipse coming up on April 8, and we (in Cleveland) will be in the path of totality!

Although the moon and sun are very different sizes, they appear to be almost the same size because the sun is much farther away. Because of this striking similarity in their apparent size, the moon's path sometimes cuts in front of the sun so as to almost entirely block it to observers on earth. This is a total eclipse, and they happen, on average, about twice every three years. The next will be in 2026, but you'll have to do some significant traveling to see it.

You see, not everyone can see a total eclipse. You have to be in just the right place in the world as the moon passes across the disc of the sun. Next month, that means you need to be in about a [115 mile-wide strip](#) that stretches from Sinaloa, Mexico to Gander, Newfoundland. If you're outside that, you may still see a partial solar eclipse. In fact, almost the entire United States will see at least a partial eclipse.

Throughout human history, eclipses have often been viewed as portents and omens, rich with symbolism, perhaps signifying divine disfavor. But the truth is, it seems like some humans have understood them to be predictable events for a very long time, perhaps [as early as 525 BC](#). But even those who know the basics of astronomy and science, who witness total solar eclipses today, describe them as something of a spiritual experience. Sometimes that is very vague, but during the 2017 eclipse, [neopagans gathered in Missouri](#) to worship and celebrate the union of the sun and moon.

Even if they aren't neopagans, your colleagues and neighbors and family members who view the eclipse may experience deep, profound feelings about the significance of what they saw. They may be searching for meaning in that. Is that fair?

I think that's fair. I have often talked about the eerie feeling that reverberates across the landscape when the air stands still and the sky turns strange hues when tornadoes are in the area. It was more common growing up in Central Illinois than here in Cleveland. There is something both beautiful and terrifying about the conditions. They have a weightiness. In turn, I feel quite small and a bit helpless. However, I'm also moved by fascination to—carefully—experience this heaviness. In the face of this weightiness, I experience contradictory impulses: to run and hide and to stay and see.

As it turns out, the Hebrew word for “weighty” or “heavy” is *kābēd*. It has the same root as the word we translate “glory,” *kābôd*. When we speak of God's glory, we are, in a sense, speaking of God's heaviness or weightiness.

Throughout scripture, when people get a glimpse of God's glory, they are both fascinated and afraid. When Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, we read, “*Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off...*” (Exodus 20:18, ESV). Despite their fear, when God made a way for the Israelites to draw near to him in the Tabernacle, they faithful did so. When the disciples received a miraculous catch of fish at Jesus' command, we read, “*Simon Peter... fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'”* (Luke 5:8, ESV). Simon Peter, however, kept following. He experienced the twin impulses of fear and fascination.

We know that the “heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1) and that all of creation reveals God's power and nature (Romans 1:19–20). Something so big, so powerful, so weighty as the workings of creation demand that we look beyond them to their source. And sometimes we slow down just enough to feel that weight.

I suspect that's what a total solar eclipse does for many people, perhaps many you know. They may experience the eclipse next month and correctly sense that there must be something greater than the power of the cosmos, even Someone who holds them in place.

Who will tell them about that Someone? Who better than you? You surely know someone excited about the eclipse. Why not ask them about it? Ask them what their experience was like. Was it a spiritual experience? If so, what do they think that points to? What do they think that means? Listen! And after you listen, what if you told them about how you believe these powerful experiences point to a greater Power, a God who created the world and everything in it and made us in his image?

Maybe that would open another door—an opportunity to walk through the gospel hope slowly with them, at their pace. Three resources I highly recommend are [Two Ways to Live](#) (Bible study), [Christianity Explained](#), and [What Is the Gospel?](#) with its [study guide](#). And if that seems a little intimidating, you can bet I or another member at Gateway would love to help you walk through that with someone.

If the heavens declare God's weightiness, let's help people see that weight in all its glory in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Members' Meeting
(March 17th, 1pm)

Good Friday Service
(March 29th, 6:30pm)

How to Study Your Bible
Sunday School
(Starts April 7th @
9:20am)

POINTS OF PRAYER

Peace in Israel

The homeless as weather
starts to get colder

Our government's future

SERMON SCHEDULE

March 17
Revelation 4:1-11 |
Throneroom: Holy, Holy,
Holy | Chris Schwab

March 24
Numbers 5:5-10 | Love, Law,
and the Lord's Image | Ben
Most

March 29
Acts 5:30-31 | Jesus, Whom
You Killed | Chris Schwab

March 31
Revelation 5:1-14 |
Throneroom: Worthy is the
Lamb Who Was Slain | Chris
Schwab

Update from Missions/Partners

On Wednesday, February 28, the Greater Cleveland Baptist Association (aka Cleveland Hope) hosted "Neighbors to Nations" in partnership with Global Gates of Canada, wrapping up the day's activities at our church, where several of our members assisted in leading the gathering to worship in song.

Global Gates is a ministry that reaches expatriates in the large immigration hubs of Canada. Per capita, Canada receives more immigrants than any other country on earth.

Cleveland may not be Toronto, but we have long been a significant hub for immigrants. The Memorial Gardens along Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. testify to the rich history of ethnic diversity. My ancestors came to Cleveland from England, looking for a better life. Some of our members came to the United States from far away to earn an education. And each year, hundreds of refugees settle in Cleveland, often displaced from their homes against their wills.

All of this means that there is a wide open door for the gospel here in Cleveland. The event focused on raising awareness of how our churches could more effectively reach these people who are coming to us.

Here's something simple you can do: Ask to hear someone's story. Ask to hear about their religion, their culture, their home, their language. Most immigrants are thrilled to talk about their culture. Be a neighbor to these individuals. As foreigners to northeast Ohio, they may feel out of place, confused, or lonely. Jesus taught us to do for our neighbors what we would wish them to do for us (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31).

Maybe as you listen and love, God will give you an opportunity to share what you believe. Chances are the person you're talking with is interested to hear your story.