

Dear Morning Star Community Church Family,

On May 19, we held a Family Meeting. Our heart was to give a “the state of the church,” and a good number of our church family came to hear our leadership (our Board of Elders and our Senior Pastor, Scott Nelson) address the recent challenges and the current state of the church, and peek at the future vision for our church. It was there, as you heard from our leadership team, we asked to hear from you. While you heard our voice, we desired to hear from the voice of our church family through a congregational survey. And we want to take this time to thank each of the 239 people of our church family who took the time and effort to share their voice. You shared incredible encouragements and concern. You shared your history as well as your hope for the future. And we want you to know that we heard you. Your voice has come into and made an impact on our leadership and strategic planning meetings as the ministry staff and board have come together to pray, seek God, and discuss the mission, core values, vision, and strategy to which God is calling Morning Star Community Church.

Before we get to what we heard, let us share what we saw, which we believe is an accurate picture of our church family as a whole:

- **We have a tenured church:** 83% of our congregation has called Morning Star home for four or more years. 60% of you have called it home for 11 or more years. 29% have called Morning Star home for over 20 years!!! We have a committed church family. This is staggering and moving. We see your commitment to what God is doing in and through Morning Star, as God has worked in and through you over the years. For so many of you, this is truly your family and community, your place of long-term friendships and connections.
- **We have an aging church:** This is both a strength and a growth area for our church. We are thrilled that we have strong demographics in the 50+ age category as 65% of our congregation is 50 years old and above. However, we, and many of you, recognize that we have growth opportunities in front of us to minister to young adults and young families in order to become a healthy multi-generational church.
- **We have a committed church:** 93% of you shared you attend Sunday services three or more times a month. Our core family attends regularly. You are committed. We know this is not the norm for the average church attender. The average church attendance is 1.5 times a month—or 20 weeks out of the year. So we are blessed to have such a committed church. And it shows. But we still have opportunity for growth in connecting to serving and community.

What we heard from you was so important. This is the voice and heartbeat of our congregation that continues to come into our leadership meetings and planning. Here are trends we heard and saw throughout the 239 surveys of what you thought we as a church are doing well in, as well as areas that you think could and need to be addressed or strengthened.

## Areas of Strength

- **Teaching.** Morning Star was founded on the values of standing for biblical truth. And that was recognized by you. This has been one of our greatest values lived out through the years, and it was one of the highest-rated remarks. You shared your love for Pastor Scott's commitment to the Word of God, and to faithfully teaching it. This commitment to biblical truth has made an incredible mark on so many of your lives.
- **Loving/Welcoming.** So many of you shared that one of our greatest strengths as a church body is how welcoming and loving our church is. Not only do you experience that love, but you see it and are committed to sharing that warm welcome with anyone who enters into the Morning Star family.
- **Community.** Many of you shared that a strength of Morning Star is our commitment to community—especially lived out in our Community Groups. Our heart is truly that 100% of our church family is connected into community. That is important to us, and that is important to you.
- **Family Meeting.** Another area that many of you mentioned was not necessarily an area of strength, but rather something you greatly appreciated. Many of you expressed appreciation for the effort and benefit of the family meeting on May 19, as well as for the venue to have your voice heard through the survey.
- **Student Ministries.** Our church has a long history of strong Student Ministries. It is clear that you appreciate this rich heritage and that you desire for the Student Ministries, as well as the Children's Ministries, to stay as one of the church's top priorities.

## Areas That Could Be/Need to Be Strengthened

- **Communication.** This was the top-rated and most-shared area of needed growth. You are asking for your church leadership—and need your church leadership—to communicate with you. You want to be a part of the process, not hear after the process. We hear that.
- **Transparency.** Almost as much a communication was mentioned, so was the subject of transparency. Many of you shared your desire for financial transparency—a desire to know about our church budget, giving, and how money is allocated and spent—not the minute details—but the overall allocation. You would like transparency on how those on the Elder Board are selected as well as clearer pictures for the future.
- **Women in Leadership.** Another trend that was shared was a desire to have more voices of women in our church and leadership. This was brought up consistently—with questions of why women are not on the Board, nor teach on a Sunday, or what role women have on our leadership team.
- **Applicatory Teaching.** One hope for the future that was shared is greater “everyday” application in our teaching.
- **Learning Opportunities for Adults.** It was clear from the survey that our church loves to learn. Many of you shared your hearts on the benefits of a renewed focus on adult

education for training purposes. Elective classes (especially on Sunday mornings) and more Men's Ministries groups and gatherings were mentioned most.

- **Future plans.** A little less than 6% of you had questions about leadership going forward in the future and Pastor Scott's plans concerning this. Your heart and care for our senior and founding pastor are evident and so is your desire to understand the future plan.

The predominant sentiment from you, our church family, is that you recognize that there are some challenges, as seen in the drop in attendance over the past couple years, as well as the need for communication and transparency. The two lowest marks we received were on the subject of church health and communication. But there was also an overwhelming positive sense of our future as well as a desire to see Morning Star grow again. You love your church. You love and support your senior pastor and staff well. You know God has a plan and a future, and are excited to see that future come to life. You want to love our city with one heartbeat, sharing the love and hope of Jesus in practical ways—because He is the hope of the world. And you want to be a part of making that future happen.

This is just the beginning. Here is our “ask” of you: Keep praying. Keep seeking the Lord. Keep engaged as we look to our future—and to being molded and shaped into the church Jesus needs us to be for the next 37 years of ministry, as we strive to make disciples and build the kingdom of God in Salem and the surrounding areas. And plan to be part of **our next Family Meeting on Sunday, September 29 at 6:30 pm.**

If you have any further questions or comments, please don't hesitate to let us know. You can email or snail mail. Or set up an appointment with an elder or member of our ministry staff by emailing [info@mstar.church](mailto:info@mstar.church) or calling the church office at (503) 581-2477.

Looking forward to all that God is going to do!

*Your MStar Ministry Leadership and Board of Elders*