

Dear Covenant Members,

Several weeks ago, I spoke with a friend who wanted to give financially to Portico. Her words still echo in my head: *“The reason I give to Portico is because 30 years ago I helped plant a church that God is still using to change lives in our city. I see God unfolding the same story at Portico and I want to be a part of that.”*

In our region, where time is measured in months not decades, it’s hard to imagine where any of us might be 30 years from now. When our focus is constantly drawn to the immediate, it’s easy to miss the eternal work God is doing right under our noses. God used this conversation with my friend to refocus my eyes to His work, His agenda and His Kingdom. Success in God’s Kingdom plays out over generations. To borrow from pastor and author Eugene Peterson, success is “long obedience in the same direction.”

As we’ve rounded the corner into the new year, let’s take a moment to review God’s goodness and refocus our eyes on His plans for Portico Church Arlington in 2019. On December 8, we gathered for our annual Member Gathering / Christmas Brunch. The following is a brief summary of what we covered.

Quite simply, 2018 was a great year. God has been rich towards us. We’ve seen longstanding prayers answered and opportunities materialize. Here are just a few highlights of 2018:

- 37 new covenant members joined our family.
- 5 new deacons were ordained for ministry.
- Clarendon Campus evening service doubled in attendance.
- Volunteer Arlington presented Portico with their Community Service award.
- Pastor Steve Reed (Clarendon Campus) approved as a church planter by the Acts 29 Network!

What story do these highlights tell? Momentum. Our ongoing hope is to use everything God has blessed us with to see our cities, neighborhoods, co-workers, and families thrive in the gospel. Cities heal one person at a time and only through the power of the gospel. Portico exists that God might use ordinary people like you and me to do His extraordinary work of *Uniting People to Life in Christ*.

Our hope for 2019 is to capitalize on the momentum God has given us. Here’s how we plan to do that.

### **New Faces + New Roles**

Pastor Nate Wagner spent most of 2018 splitting time between the morning service (HB Woodlawn Campus) and evening service (Clarendon Campus). The original plan was to send Nate with Pastor Steve Reed to plant the Clarendon Campus. After a season of prayer and discernment, the elders decided to bring Nate on full time at the HB Woodlawn Campus instead

of sending him with the Clarendon Campus. This decision hinged on matching Pastor Nate's gifts, experience and strengths with the need. Bottom line: Nate is an excellent fit for this role at the HB Woodlawn Campus. Allowing Nate to give full focus to the core ministries of Community Groups, Membership/Connection, and Portico Kids will better benefit the mission.

This decision produced some sadness for the Clarendon Campus leader team. But the Lord has provided a new face to join the Clarendon Campus pastoral team in Stephen Lastova. Stephen brings a powerful passion for the gospel and a great capacity for mobilizing mission. He will serve with Pastor Steve Reed in leading the mission at the Clarendon Campus.

### **Clarendon Campus**

As mentioned above, Steve and Kelsey Reed successfully completed the rigorous Acts 29 assessment process in December 2018! Acts 29 is a *diverse global family of church planting churches* that has 730 member churches in 40 countries. Their mission is to raise up healthy pastors that will plant healthy churches. Portico Church Arlington is a long-standing member of the Acts 29 Network.

We believe the Gospel grows best when new churches are planted in our communities. This is why we remain committed to raising up new pastors to plant new churches. God has been so generous and faithful in blessing this commitment. Steve and Kelsey's assessment is a major accomplishment and a key waypoint on the journey to see the Clarendon Campus evening service transition to an autonomous Portico Church. We are so proud of Steve and Kelsey and their commitment to see God's Kingdom flourish in our city.

April 2020 is the planned date for the Clarendon Campus to transition from a service of Portico Church Arlington to an autonomous church. Much of our energy and resources in 2019 will be focused on seeing this happen well. We want to set up the Clarendon Campus for decades of faithful ministry. Please join us in praying for this outcome and being ready to jump in to help in any way needed.

### **You**

Maturing as individuals and as a church means life gets harder, not easier. As we grow, life becomes more complex - decisions seem less clear, the demands of life are greater, and we experience loss more frequently. Greater pressure in life will tempt us to take our eyes off of the blessing and call God has given us in being His called-out people - the Church. Our dependence on God and one-another will fade away if we respond to the increasing pressures of life by isolating ourselves. In fact, God has designed His Church to thrive in turbulence. "*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*" (Proverbs 17:17) Like the moon hung in a dark sky, the power and glory of the Gospel (God's work of saving you) is best seen against the darkness of frustration and suffering. The season of maturity we are entering into is a clear call to reestablish our lives as belonging wholly to God and to one another.

What does this mean for you? As Elder Geoff Peck shared in his testimony at the member gathering, it may mean that God is calling you to *stay* as a missionary instead of moving on to the next city or the next thing. It may mean that it is time for you to use the strengths and resources God has given you to get in the fight by serving or giving in a new way (like leading a small group, joining a service team, or simply by regularly attending worship and engaging in the life of the church). On the other hand, it may mean you need to make a pit stop to receive some care. Some of us have a hard time knowing when it's time to receive instead of give. For all of us, it means looking at our lives and our church in light of God's present Kingdom. Jesus has broken the power of death. Eternal life is here and ready to grow in the lives of real people. Jesus is returning to claim all that is His...and that includes us. Let's not get distracted or waste anything He has given us.

Friends, you make serving as your pastor a joy. It is such a high honor to follow Jesus with you. I look forward to all that God has in store for us in 2019 and in the decades ahead. May they be fruitful, full of God's glory, and a blessing to this world.

For His Glory Alone,

Jason Conner  
Lead Pastor  
Portico Church Arlington