

## Planning for the Future: Christ the Redeemer Church

This December marks the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CTR Church. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were a "mission church," meeting with only four other families in the dining hall of the Scenic Valley Inn. Nine years later, we are a full-fledged church with two elders besides myself. Back in 2006, we were wondering if we would ever be "a real church." Now the questions are different as we consider the next season of our church's life:

1. In 2006, we believed that since there aren't that many people in Manhattan that are both evangelical and reformed, we would all join together in one congregation (our church!) that would support a broad range of reformed practice. Instead, about five theologically-similar churches have been started by others since we entered Manhattan. *Are small, distinctive churches a trend to resist or to embrace?*
2. Our congregation has held at around a dozen family units for the last few years, which doesn't lend well to supporting a pastor full-time, especially not the large-family type. Most of my local pastor-friends have full- or part-time "day jobs," as their churches cannot fully support them. Some small-town pastors raise support from outside donors long-term through organizations like the Rural Home Missionary Association. I don't want to propagate a church model that is financially unsustainable, but I also don't think God has given me the capacity to add another job to my plate. *Do we hold fast and expect God to bring a larger congregation, do I add a part-time job, or do I set up for long-term fundraising?*
3. My initial church-planting approach was to focus on the quality of the worship service and encourage the members to invite others in. However, my approach has not met with as much growth as I had anticipated, partly because the majority of Manhattan is transient, either enrolled at K-State or enlisted in the Army, so people move away as fast as they move in. *Is it time to launch in new directions as a church, or do we keep doing what we believe God originally led us to do?*



One last family photo before Josh (3<sup>rd</sup> from right) headed off in September to the Law School at University of Chicago. Beni (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) is scheduled to be sworn in as Riley County Commissioner on January 12.

Our church is establishing a fund to address some **unexpected expenses** our family has had over the last few months. It is our hope that this fund can tie us through while we develop a more sustainable long-term financial plan with the elders of our church. We welcome you to contribute. *Donations to the CTR Church Pastor Fund are tax-deductible.*



## Kid's Corner: Lillian Faith Wilson

Hey everyone! This is Lillian! Highlights of the past year would be...

- Dance camp this year with GraceAnne and Irene teaching us.
- Doing Easy-Peasy-Homeschool games on the computer.



-All the hiking we got to do on our vacation in Colorado. The most fun was climbing Hahns Peak for the first time! It was fun, but tiring. I enjoyed the view from the top and all the wild raspberries we got to eat along the trail!

-I also enjoyed taking Amos' public speaking class this fall. I got to do a speech on birds! They're one of my favorite animals.

I'm reading Exodus, but I'm also going through an Action Bible. I'm at the point where David is fighting Absalom's army. I also like to read A-Z mysteries, Capitol mysteries, and Cam Jansen mysteries.

I'm excited to do Bethlehem Revisited again this year. (I'm in the angel choir.) Also a big thing for me is I'll finally be old enough to compete in the NCFCA speech and debate league in the spring! I'm very excited and I'm hoping to do a duo with Grace Anne! Please pray I will do well in all my school work and that I'll continue to grow in the Lord.



- ☞ We greatly appreciate your prayers as we seek God's guidance for the coming years. We are having a leadership retreat in January to discuss the issues on the front page.
- ☞ My sermon series on the Gospel-Centered Life (a derivative of *Sonship*) went well. Please pray that these truths will help us break out of man-centered ways of thinking about God, ourselves, and others.
- ☞ Our second parenting Bible study finished well, and now I am working on membership classes for two Army couples. One of our army men who was supposed to deploy had that canceled – Praise the Lord! We still have one soldier deployed in Iraq, though, so please keep praying for him and his family!
- ☞ Thanksgiving saw 13 guests at our home – mostly international students – and we shared the gospel through the story of the Pilgrims. Now it's time for the annual Bethlehem Revisited living nativity where Amos and I get to preach the gospel to hundreds of visitors! Please pray for long-lasting spiritual fruit!



# Merry Christmas!