

Making All Things New: A Renewed Call

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I am deeply saddened by the lack of support (and even resistance) to Israel, Jewish ministry, and Messianic congregations in many segments of the Church. But I am also encouraged by the emergence of influential Christian leaders who love the Jewish people unconditionally and are not ashamed to take the Gospel “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16).

One strong ally of the Jewish people is Gateway Church (GWC) in the Dallas-Ft. Worth (DFW), Texas, metroplex. GWC is a Bible-based, evangelistic, Spirit-empowered church founded in 2000 by Pastor Robert Morris. I serve on Pastor Robert’s team stewarding the area of Church and Jewish Relations.

Today we meet as one church in many locations with more than 32,000 people attending each weekend, and over 90,000¹ considering Gateway their church home in the DFW area.

Our vision is to see people *saved, healed, set free, disciplined, equipped, empowered, and serving.*

Our mission is to help each person at Gateway *believe* in Jesus, *belong* to family, *become* a follower, and *build* God’s kingdom.

We have a slogan at GWC, that “**we are all about people,**” because *God is all about people.* One of the ways we express our love for Him is through our love for people, and we do that by striving to help each person who comes to Gateway grow in their relationship with the Lord.

In 2018 at GWC, 7228 decisions were made for Christ and 1033 were baptized.

By God’s grace, GWC is also a very resourced church. **Pastor Robert believes strongly these blessings are a direct result of our commitment to take the Gospel “to the Jew first.”**

I had the privilege to grow up in ministry with Robert in a wonderful local church under Pastor Olen Griffing at Shady Grove Church. In time, we both came on staff and became pastors and elders. In an elders’ meeting in 1994, while studying the Scriptures on Israel and the Jewish people, we developed a deep biblical conviction of the priority of seeing the gospel go to the Jewish people. I was sent out as our first elder into missions (to the Jew first) in 1996. This was to establish the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJBI) in the Former Soviet Union in support of Jonathan Bernis’ Hear O Israel Festivals. (Shady Grove Church was the “Gentile” support to this initiative with Jonathan, Dan Juster, Marty Waldman and other Messianic Jewish leaders whom we were in relationship.) Pastor Robert was sent out and founded Gateway Church in 2000.

¹ Reflected monthly by those who either give, check their children into children’s ministry, or attend a group, with no double counting.

In 2015, I turned over the MJB to a younger “Joshua” and joined Ps. Robert’s team to oversee Jewish ministry.

We see Christian leaders in past generations who sought to apply the “to the Jew first” value in their missions’ strategy. Pastor Robert also sought the Lord in how to apply it in GWC’s context. GWC’s expression was reflected in the first check of the month going to Jewish ministry. Now we give a tithe of the tithe (1%) to Israel and Jewish ministry (and encourage other local churches to do so), and our first service of the month is our “Shabbat Service.” Gateway gives 15% of the tithe to world missions as we have a great love for the nations also.

When we consider our **GWC global priorities**, we also consider “to the Jew first.” Paul’s analogy of the olive tree in Romans 11 summarizes our three main areas of global emphasis.

1. The natural branches of the tree—the Messianic Jewish community and remnant. We want to serve to see their congregations and ministries are healthy. We also affirm their desire to have a proper connection with the Jewish community and the Church.
2. The branches grafted into the tree—the Church of the nations. We want local churches to understand the Jewish roots of this tree and not be arrogant toward the natural branches. Their health is also tied to a proper alignment with Israel and the Messianic community.
3. Those branches on the ground—the Jewish community that God wants grafted back into their own olive tree. We must show them unconditional love which includes the gospel.

Our LCJE theme this year is taken from Colossians, “Making All Things New.” And the title assigned me is “A Renewed Call.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word for “calling” often refers to “the divine call to redemption,” as Eph 4:1, “*to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.*”²

It’s used once in Colossians in 3:15 to our calling to “one body,” “*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*”

I believe the Church and the Messianic Jewish community are both called to greater unity in their diversity.

We in the Church need the Messianic community. And you in the Messianic community need the Church.

But there are specific callings for specific assignments for specific seasons:

- a. In Acts 16:10, Paul had a vision at Troas where a man was pleading for him to come to Macedonia and help. They concluded, “*that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.*”
- b. In Acts 13:2, “*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’*”

We are each called to divine redemption, but He graces us with divine calls in specific seasons of life.

² All Bible references are in the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

The Greek word for “new” is used one time in Colossians in 3:10: “*and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...*”

“Renewed” is only used twice in the New Testament, here and in 2 Cor 4:16: *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

This is a renewal by moving from one stage to a higher more developed one.

My prayer is that you will hear from the Lord this week and be renewed in His unique calling for your life in this season.

I would like to focus the remainder of my time today on the grace given Gateway Church and our specific assignment in God’s call of divine redemption. In truth, we all are attempting to play our small part in His much bigger plan.

Maybe the Lord will use something of our Gateway Church’s story and culture to encourage you in this season of your life. **The following DNA, values, social covenant, and role as a Gateway team member are as follows:**

Gateway DNA:

At Gateway, we seek to build and nurture a culture for our organization that produces and protects a God-honoring atmosphere. We lay the foundation for this cultural expression by personally living out Gateway’s values and instilling them in all who work alongside us on our staff. Our DNA can be described by three words: spiritual, professional, and relational. By upholding these values and our social covenant (see below), we can better serve the kingdom through our purpose, vision, and mission.

Spiritual

Being spiritual is having God-centered influence grounded in scriptural truth and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We value being teachable and humble, fostering a culture of kindness, trust, loyalty, and honor. We are also servant-hearted as we focus on building the kingdom and being full of faith to hear, believe, and obey God.

Professional

Being professional is producing high-quality work in a productive manner while operating in a culture of excellence, not perfectionism, to support Gateway’s mission. We steward Gateway’s vision and purpose while upholding high leadership standards regardless of position and lead with love, remaining above reproach in our conduct.

Relational

Being relational is valuing relationships over results. We show integrity by being humble, honest, trust-worthy, and accountable to one another and the Lord. We are unified in supporting the needs of our organization—collaborating together, being approachable in every situation, and having fun along the way! We are also compassionate—always extending mercy and grace balanced with truth.

Model of a River flowing in a City

In Revelation 21-22, there is a city with a river flowing through it. Some want only a church with a river (Holy Spirit, spontaneity) flowing through it. Others want a large and

good structure (Word and organization), but there is little of the life of God flowing in it. Like the City of God, we believe a vibrant and growing local church must balance both.

Our Values:

- **Unity—Psalm 133**

Relationships will always supersede issues in importance. Unity will require us to focus on vision (purpose, mission, and principles). The efforts of every individual will be harnessed to the vision. A team approach to ministry, problem solving and decision making, and operating within the integrity of our structure will be the norm. All disagreements and offenses will be dealt with in a timely and biblical manner.

- **Excellence—Matthew 5:16**

In every area of ministry and administration we will be standard bearers for the glory of God. Every individual and ministry will carry the spirit of excellence (not perfectionism), embrace the continuous effort to do better, and always strive for God's best.

- **Humility—James 4:6**

The spirit of leadership will be the servant spirit. The higher a person's ascendancy in the organizational structure, the more their rights decrease, and their responsibilities increase.

- **Service—Ezekiel 44**

Administration will be the servant of ministry, not the master. Policies exist to enable ministry to function with effective and predictable results, not to hinder or quench kingdom work.

- **Faith—Hebrews 11:6**

We will be decisive and proactive based on God's revealed direction and plans. Though we will guard against presumption, we will not be driven or hindered by fear based on circumstances or the unknown.

- **Equity—Jeremiah 22:13–16**

We will be committed to justice and right treatment of all individuals. We will not show partiality to any individual or group and will strive to remain above reproach in all dealings with people.

- **Compassion—Philippians 4:5**

We will express an attitude and spirit of compassion and mercy, balanced with truth, to all individuals. We will be outward focused with a desire to reach the lost and to heal and restore the hurting.

- **Submission—Romans 13:1**

We embrace God's ultimate position of authority (Jesus is the Head of the Church) and God's plan for local delegated authority. We will adhere to the principles of submission to, and honoring of, authority at all levels of the organization and will operate within the integrity of our authority structure. We will allow appeal with a right spirit within our established protocol.

- **Integrity—Philippians 2:15**

We uphold all biblical standards for conduct and reputation for personal, family, business, financial, and community involvement for all individuals in the organization. We will strive to remain above reproach in all areas, realizing that we represent Christ to the world as His ambassadors.

- Generosity—2 Corinthians 9:6

We will seek opportunities to generously share our resources and reproduce what God has produced in us and given to us.

- Kingdom Centered—1 Corinthians 12:14–27

We will be committed to advancing the work of the kingdom in the body of Christ at large by recognizing and supporting other churches and ministries God gives us opportunity to co-labor with.

- Truth and Spirit Centered—John 1, 14, 16

We are committed to being fully grounded in scriptural truth and fully empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is our road map, and the Holy Spirit is our guide and empowerment to reach God's destiny for us as a church.

Gateway Church Social Covenant (kept ever before the staff):

We commit to love, value, respect, and protect each other. Therefore, we continually choose the following.

Fully invest in relationships by:

- Listening to each other.
- Encouraging and affirming each other.
- Offering, soliciting, and receiving honest feedback.
- Believing the best motives.
- Resolving conflict with forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Being teachable and vulnerable with each other.
- Reproducing ourselves in the lives of others.

Fully empower relationships by:

- Trusting each other within healthy boundaries.
- Challenging constraints and engaging in healthy confrontation.
- Developing potential in each other, which results in personal growth.
- Walking in unity with grace and truth.
- Focusing on the task(s) at hand.
- Being accountable to produce fruitful returns.
- Extending the opportunity to dream and have fun.

Our Role as a Team Member:

As a team member of Gateway Church, we have a responsibility to the church, our fellow team members, and our manager. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Coming to work, arriving on time, and putting in a full workday.
- Abiding by church and departmental policies and work rules.
- Being committed to a biblical lifestyle 24 hours a day.
- Making a commitment to personal excellence in your ministry or work performance.
- Treating team members with respect.
- Working with our manager to address problems or concerns. The most effective method for resolving a problem in the church is to discuss it with your manager. If one believes he/she has not been treated in a manner consistent with church policy, it is their responsibility to initiate further discussion within the structure of the organization.

Foundational to everything we teach is the belief that a HEALTHY local church/congregation is the hope of the world.

- We believe that healthy congregations are led by healthy leaders (1 Cor 11:1, Phil 4:9).
- We believe that “freedom” is a life-long process, so we encourage leaders to seek help in any areas of struggle.
 - Rest retreats
 - Sabbaticals
 - Pastor on staff who help others on staff in atmosphere of confidentiality
 - When hired, make spouse feel valued. They can appeal if too busy or the family is being impacted.
 - We feel this job can be done in 45, but no more than 50, hours per week. We don’t want them out more than three nights per week.
- Sadly, many congregations in North America are in a very unhealthy atmosphere. It is estimated that 90% of churches are stagnant or in decline. Of the 10% that are growing, most growth is “transfer growth” from declining churches.
- The bottom line is that we are not reaching the lost, unchurched or de-churched (trading partners).
- We gather with other believers INSIDE our buildings to reinforce our prejudices/intolerances against those OUTSIDE the church.
- We hide from and often judge those who are "unlike us" because they have different worldviews and belief systems.
- We distance ourselves from them rather than build relationship with them.
- We fail to design ministries to reach those outside the church with the good news of Christ.
- We are no longer missional, thus not in touch with our own communities
- Bottom line: Our congregations are designed for the “already convinced” (narrow bandwidth).

The gospel never changes, but if we want to reach new people ...

- We must become a “friend of sinners” like Yeshua.
- We must get to know them so that we can understand how they think.
- We must realize that what worked yesterday (30 years ago) won’t work today.
- We must carefully present the gospel in relevant, practical and attractive ways.

I Corinthians 9:22 — *“I have become ALL things to ALL men, so that I may by ALL means save SOME.”* (NASB)

1 Samuel 16:7b – *For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*

Since “man looks at the outward appearance” we must realize “customer service” (for the lack of a better term) is very important

- Friendly parking lot attendants
- Friendly greeters/children’s workers
- Easy to follow drop-down signage in hallways
- Air-conditioning/heating set at the appropriate temperature
- An up-to-date and guest-friendly website
- A freshly mowed church campus
- Clean carpet/restrooms
- Services that begin/end on time

- **Questions:**

- Based on “customer service” alone, would a guest return to your congregation or go elsewhere?
- If I wasn't on staff here, is this the church I would CHOOSE to attend?
- How can we avoid becoming a church that was once great?

More Questions:

If you want your congregation to experience healthy and lasting growth, you must determine which of these two questions you will ask:

- COMMON: How can we get OUR PEOPLE to invite their neighbors, co-workers, family members, and friends to our congregation? (good question; but not the best question)
- UNCOMMON: How can WE (staff/leaders) create a great guest experience in our congregation?

Within your region/sphere of influence ...

- There are couples who have determined that divorce is the only option.
- There are children crying themselves to sleep each night while mom/dad fight.
- There are various forms of abuse (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual).
- There are people who have unexpectedly lost their jobs.
- There are people who have received frightening medical reports (e.g., cancer).
- There are countless people suffering from fear, depression, addictions, and hopelessness.

Promise: If you HELP people, God will send MORE people, because God LOVES people

Final Questions:

- Why would God send you more people if there is no “plan in place” to help them?
- Why would God send you more people if you are not “prepared” to help them?

If (since) you want your congregation to be a healthy, life-giving, and thriving community, you must be a congregation that has relevant and practical ministries in place to help people experience everything Yeshua died to make available to them.