



# LIFT

G R A C E



G R A V I T Y

The background of the entire page is a white field filled with a complex, abstract pattern of thin, vertical and horizontal lines in various colors including teal, orange, purple, green, and yellow. These lines are of varying lengths and are often terminated by small circles or rectangular blocks of the same color. The overall effect is a modern, minimalist aesthetic. The text is centered in the upper half of the page.

LIFT your eyes to the LORD  
from whom comes our help.

PSALM 121:1-2

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THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

● Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28

● Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.

MATTHEW 6:21

● The Lord upholds all who fall and LIFTs up all who are bowed down.

PSALM 145:14

● He LIFTs the needy from the ash heap.

PSALM 113:7

## ● DEAR CHURCH FAMILY

**"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."** Thus begins Charles Dickens epic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. The beloved author was speaking specifically of conditions during the French Revolution, when the struggle for liberty, equality and fraternity lived alongside profound cruelty and injustice. But Dickens was also marking a larger truth.

Hope and progress often exist alongside hurt and problems. Human affairs are never just good or just bad. Life contains both light and darkness, Spirit and sin, new possibilities and familiar pains. The question is:

**Where will we focus our attention and energies?**

You and I are living through an era that might seem like the worst of times. There is a lot of pain and trouble. War in Ukraine. Violence on American streets. Conflict in the halls of power. Economic turbulence. Injustice. Ineptitude. Depression. Addiction. The list goes on. Life can feel hopelessly heavy.

As followers of Jesus, however, we don't give in to despair. **We believe there is a GRACE greater than the GRAVITY of life.** We take sin and struggles seriously. But we choose to focus our attention and energies on the BEST. We keep sowing and serving and striving together in the confidence that God's redeeming plan will finally prevail.

We are heirs of those people who stood at the Cross when all looked lost, but discovered the power of Christ's resurrection. We are the spiritual descendants of disciples such as the Macedonian Christians who, *"in the midst of a very severe trial"* and *"extreme poverty,"* poured themselves out with *"rich generosity"* to help others in need (2 Corinthians 8). We're the legacy of an Early Church who lived so boldly and beautifully in their time that God used them to transform an Empire (Acts 2:42-47).

These sentiments are not just nice quotations. They're not merely ancient history. **This is also the story of Christ Church. This is what we do.**

Do you know that the Sanctuary of Christ Church and our first education wing were built in 1968 through the sacrifices of just 82 households? There were only 400 in the congregation at that time, yet they set their sights on creating a home that could seat more than 1,000 people.



More than fifteen times since then—the last time, seven years ago—the people of Christ Church came together to increase or improve the capacity of our facilities to serve more people. Throughout our 58 years, we’ve continued to expand our ministry and missions to sow the seeds of the Gospel and bring hope and help to a world in need of a lift.

When a global pandemic crushed normal life, Christ Church rose up again. We distributed 8,000 masks, livestreamed worship and Christian education, provided tons of food, water and medical supplies to people in need and kept reaching out to one another. We used part of an unexpected budget surplus to pay off \$7.6 million in medical debt for burdened families.

When war struck Ukraine, we shipped truckloads of supplies to refugees coming into Poland. When disaster hit Florida, Kentucky and Puerto Rico, we sent funds and teams to help with the relief effort. When kids and adults alike have needed spiritual guidance and relational support to handle the weight of life, Christ Church’s volunteers and staff have been there to help lift them up and lift their eyes to the LORD who is our ultimate help. Again, this is our story.

**Now, a NEW chapter of our story is opening up.** This booklet describes our vision to LIFT the faith and discipleship of everyone who calls Christ Church their spiritual home. It details our hope to be the hands Jesus uses to lift thousands of others toward their God-given potential. I am asking you to read every page of this prospectus carefully and pray about your part in it.

As you do that, let me state the obvious: From a human point of view, this is probably among “the worst of times” to be advancing a stewardship initiative. At the same time—given the state of the world today, the difference a vitalized church can make to people in need, and the enduring call of Christ—it is also “the best of times” to rise to greater discipleship.

**Do you believe there is a GRACE greater than the GRAVITY of life?**

There is. So, let’s not hunker down, pull in, and be fearful of the future. Let’s trust and serve the God of LIFT.

Rev. Dr. Daniel Meyer | Lead Pastor

● WE PRAY THROUGH THIS INITIATIVE  
GOD WILL MOVE TO LIFT OUR...

**Faith & Discipleship**     **priceless**     Raise our eyes to God and boldly follow wherever He leads. Our prayer is that we all open ourselves to Him afresh, letting Him shape our hearts and minds, so that we will be His hands of grace to lift others toward their God-given potential.

**Core Ministries**     **\$26.5M**     Undergird our church’s vital ministries of worship, growth, care, service AND missions for two full years and continue our progress on the major strategic initiatives essential to our church’s future.

**Missions Impact**     **\$.5M**     Increase our investment in the life-changing work of our 70 mission partners and provide better facilities for the Christ Church Food Pantry and associated mission outreach programs.

**Kids & Families**     **\$3M**     Restore and expand our Preschool Ministry, improve check-in and security for youth and their families, renovate our children and student ministry spaces, and start a ministry that expands our capacity to include kids of all abilities.

**Campus Quality**     **\$2M**     Address many deferred maintenance, tech and infrastructure needs including roofing, painting, carpeting, parking lot resurfacing, furnishings, lighting, AV equipment and much more needed to keep our campuses current.

**Future Capacity**     **\$2M**     Provide us with resources to pay down our past building debt to very conservative levels and eventually free up hundreds of thousands for future ministry and mission.

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**Two-Year Goal**     **\$34M**     January 2023–December 2024



**The time is right to lift our eyes to God and raise our faith and discipleship.**

A vitalized Christ Church is sorely needed after COVID and in the midst of our troubled times.

Hundreds of people have come into Christ Church in the seven years since our last major initiative (Take Root). We want all of us to experience the blessing of a winsome challenge to examine the relationship between our stewardship and our discipleship and to grow in our faith.

## FAITH & DISCIPLESHIP

**PRICELESS**

**Our #1 aim is to LIFT the faith and discipleship of everyone.**





## CORE MINISTRIES

**\$26.5M**

**We project the  
need for modest  
budget increases  
year-over-year.**



**As we continue to reach more and more people in our community** we recognize that our ministries and missions will need to keep pace with the rising costs affecting us all. Our gifts to the LIFT Initiative will help support the base ministry and mission we all cherish.

- 260 weekly **worship services**, reaching more than 3,000 people with God's Good News
- Weekly **kids programming**, discipling more than 600 children and students
- Special **holiday services**, sharing the Gospel with more than 6,000 people
- **Baptisms, weddings and funerals**, celebrating and caring for thousands of people in milestone moments
- **Adult small and midsize groups**, helping more than 1,000 people take the next step in their faith journey
- Daily **pastoral care** and **counseling** for those in need
- Weekly **support** and **recovery groups**
- Seasonal **concerts** and **outreach** events
- Hospitality and food service, communication and tech ministries, and facility operations and maintenance to **support all these ministries**



## MISSIONS IMPACT

**\$0.5M**

**We will make it even clearer that because of Jesus we are...**

- **For Families**
- **For Chicagoland**
- **For the World**

**For almost 60 years, Christ Church has been passionate about living out Christ's call to go into all the world.**

During the last 25 years alone, our congregation has sent nearly \$40M to multiply disciples and churches, lift women and children, transform communities, relieve suffering, and develop leaders through some 70 domestic and global mission partners.

Through our LIFT Initiative, we seek to raise our annual missions giving in the next two years. We want to invest an additional \$500,000 to provide a better facility for our Food Pantry here at home and support the work of our mission partners.



## KIDS & FAMILIES

**\$3.0M**

**We strive to be a highly attractive and resourceful environment for families.**



**Through LIFT, we aim to strengthen our ministry to children, students and families.**

Our desire is to reconfigure and modernize our classroom and gathering areas for the growing numbers of children and students coming to Christ Church. We want to create better spaces for kids to build friendships, learn God's Word and take the next step in their faith journey.

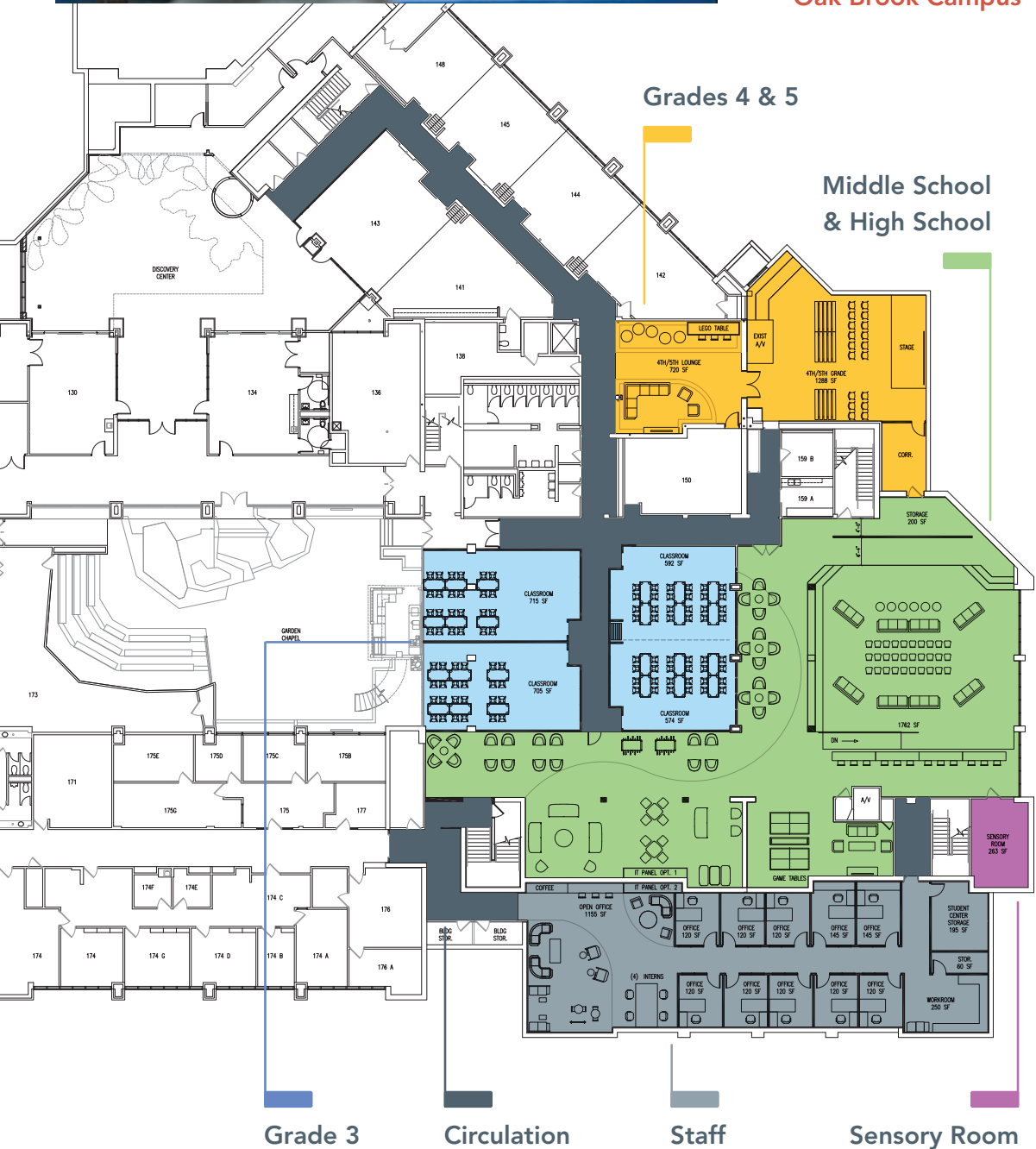
In order to improve security and way-finding at both campuses, we hope to create a single point-of-entry and exit to our children's and student ministry areas.

Our proposed renovations will give third graders more centrally located and well-lit rooms. We seek to provide an expanded center for fourth and fifth graders. And, we look to give middle and high schoolers a significantly upgraded environment for small group huddles and large group gatherings that will also work for some adult ministries.

Lastly, we are eager to improve our ability to serve families with special needs by hiring an All-Abilities Director to help resource our kids, parents, staff, and volunteers. We also hope to provide sensory rooms that are designed for all our young people.



POTENTIAL  
FUTURE  
LOWER LEVEL  
Oak Brook Campus





## OUR HOPE IS TO CREATE

a more streamlined entry for students, expand the hang-out spaces, make it more accessible for all abilities and create a more flexible large-group meeting area that can serve adults as well as teens.







## CAMPUS QUALITY

**\$2.0M**

**We hope to begin to address deferred maintenance, tech and infrastructure needs at both campuses.**

**Over recent years, we have made substantial improvements in the facility platform that supports our ministry.** We will prioritize spending on our aging facilities depending on monies received.

Some of the projects at our OAK BROOK campus include:

- Renew the tech systems in the Sanctuary, Garden Chapel and Discovery Center
- Repair or replace roofs
- Resurface the parking lot
- Replace carpeting and repaint rooms
- Update the kitchen equipment

At our BUTTERFIELD campus some of the projects are:

- Improve our tech systems in the Auditorium, as well as update seating
- Improve the Gymnasium lighting and replace the flooring
- Resurface the parking lot
- Service mechanical systems







When we emerged from our last major initiative, we had approximately \$11M in debt from the renovation of our Oak Brook campus. Since then, we have paid that down to \$8M—a conservative level by American church standards. **Through our LIFT Initiative, we hope to pay off millions more and, therefore, lower our debt service requirements.**

## FUTURE CAPACITY

**\$2.0M**

**By reducing our debt we will free up resources for more ministry aimed at God's purposes.**





## HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

**We want everyone to experience the joy of responding personally to God's invitation to join in His mission to LIFT others.**

We pray for 100% participation for all who call Christ Church their home church—at whatever level God directs you. We don't want anyone to miss the lift this can bring to our own faith, discipleship and Christian influence.



**We invite you to go on a spiritual journey with God and take a step of faith in your generosity. Please join us and...**

- **PRAY BOLDLY**

Ask the Lord to move your heart and everyone in the congregation to LIFT Christ Church to a higher level of discipleship and giving toward the needs of others.

- **COMMIT CONFIDENTLY & GIVE GENEROUSLY**

Ask the Lord what sacrificial giving looks like for you and your family. Commit confidently trusting the Lord to use and multiply your gifts to His glory.


- **SHARE YOUR STORY**

As God grows you through this journey, consider telling your story to encourage others.




## ONE FUND INITIATIVE

### WE ARE INVITING EVERYONE TO COMMIT TO GIVE TO CHRIST CHURCH



The LIFT initiative encompasses all giving from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024. In those two years every gift given to Christ Church will go to help LIFT our core ministries; increase our investment in missions; improve security and ministry space for kids and families; address deferred maintenance, tech and infrastructure needs at both campuses; and pay down our past building debt.





## THE JOURNEY OF A GIVER

**Growing in our journey as a giver is less about a specific amount or percentage than it is about the attitude and priorities of our hearts.** The goal is to keep taking steps that represent personal growth toward a lifestyle of generosity and sacrifice—one more and more like Jesus.

We do not ascend to God or earn His favor by our giving. But we DO express His impact upon our lives. Scripture encourages us to grow in every facet of our walk with Christ, including the grace of giving.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7


### AM I AN INITIAL GIVER?

I've started to give out of a response to God's Word. I may do more or give more frequently in the future, but I've decided to give something and am trusting God and the leaders of the church with this gift.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7–15

### AM I A CONSISTENT GIVER?

I exercise the discipline of giving regularly to the Lord's work through His Church. I give a recurring gift online in order to be more consistent. Or, I have other disciplines I use to ensure that I'm regularly giving and not just sporadic in my giving. 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6–8



**AM I AN INTENTIONAL GIVER?** I give sincere thought to how my giving to the work of the Church and Kingdom relates to the other areas where I spend my money. I've started making my giving an intentional choice that reflects the priority I put on being an agent of God's purposes. I know the amount or percentage I want to commit to God. LUKE 14:28–35

**AM I A SACRIFICIAL GIVER?** I've thought quite a bit about the long-term (vs. month-to-month) effects of my generosity. I make short-term decisions about spending (particularly about larger-ticket items) in light of my long-term commitment to have my generosity reflect my faith and God's interest. 2 SAMUEL 24:18–25

**AM I A LEGACY GIVER?** I recognize the cost Christ paid on the cross for me and the beauty of His Kingdom's life. I seek to honor God with 100% of who I am and what I have. I don't literally give everything to God but I definitely give in a way that challenges and changes me. My giving determines my spending/saving rather than the other way around. 1 TIMOTHY 6:6–9

Life can feel very heavy these days. We feel the weight of **FAMILY** and **WORK** expectations, the pressure of **FINANCES**, the heaviness of our **POLITICAL** and **CULTURAL** conflicts. It is hard not to become downcast over all this.

BUT THERE IS A

grace greater than  
the gravity of life.

That grace comes from the GOD who wants to lift our eyes to Him, to lift our vision for living, and to use all of us at Christ Church to lift others to their full potential.

Join us as we start the new year with a provocative message series that will give your faith and discipleship a powerful LIFT!





## 6 WEEK SERMON SERIES

Dear Friends,

I am so excited to be entering into this significant sermon and study series with you. I believe you'll find this to be a deeply meaningful "reset" for your Christian experience or, perhaps, the framework you've been seeking to make your discipleship truly central and transforming in your life. Please do all that you can to be present for every one of these messages. Ask God to show you His heart and shape your heart and mine to be more like His. Pray that the LORD will give me words that are truly helpful to YOU.

Rev. Dr. Daniel Meyer | Lead Pastor

### THE FIVE FINGERS OF FAITH

Like the five fingers of a hand, there are five movements of faith that God seeks to inspire in us, so that He can use us to LIFT others. Each finger of faith is important.

1. **Following** God where He leads us
2. **Trusting** God's promises with all that we are
3. **Prioritizing** God and His Kingdom above everything
4. **Surrendering** our possessions for the sake of God and His service
5. **Committing** to God's vision and power regardless of our circumstances

## FOLLOWING GOD WHERE HE LEADS

**PREPARE** through this week's breath prayer

**INHALE | Where You Lead**

**EXHALE** | May I Follow

RECEIVE | Mark 2:1–12

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## JOURNAL your response to the message

Jesus, I feel

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## RESPONDING to the message

- TABLE TALK | At a meal this week, discuss this question with those around the table: **If you were there, how would you have responded to what the four friends did?**
- Text, email or post to your small group or social media sites one big idea from this week's message that has stayed with you.
- Prepare for small group by reviewing the related questions.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

# ● GROUP DISCUSSION

## PREPARE

A. Pray together this week's breath prayer.

**INHALE | Where You Lead**

**EXHALE | May We Follow**

B. Share how you completed the journaling prompt at the end of this weekend's worship service?

C. Ice breaker question: Share a favorite podcast, author, YouTuber, Instagrammer, chef, etc., that you follow. What draws you to follow them?

## RECEIVE

**Slowly and prayerfully read or listen to Mark 2:1–12 twice.**

Begin and end each reading with a few moments of silence.

In the quiet, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into knowing and living what you are to receive from this passage of Scripture.

## REFLECT

1. There is potentially a lot of "following God" that can be read into this passage: the gathering crowds, so many eager to hear Jesus' message, and probably a lot more not described in the text specifically. How would you characterize the quality of faith and "following" of those carrying their friend to Jesus? How do they differ from the rest of the crowd?

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2. Why did the four friends go to so much trouble to help the paralyzed man? What was in it for them?

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3. In verse 5, we read that “Jesus saw their faith.” What does this reveal to us about how Jesus evaluates their faith?

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4. How did their actions embody their faith?

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5. Read verse 5 again. Why do you think Jesus chose to forgive the man’s sins (heal him spiritually) before healing him physically?

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6. What does this story tell you about the difference between a spirituality and faith that transforms us and a counterfeit spirituality and faith that cannot? Compare and contrast the Pharisees and the five friends.

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## REFOCUS

This group of friends made a commitment to another friend in need, to bring him to Jesus. In that same spirit, during the opening week of LIFT, resolve to make a commitment to this LIFT initiative. For this first week, the how isn't important yet. What is important is the focus of your heart toward following the Holy Spirit's leading.

As you wrap up your group time, go around and pray for the person on your right. Ask that as a result of experiencing LIFT their faith would exhibit that of the friends from this week's Scripture focus. Pray toward a "busting through the roof to drop their friend right in front of Jesus" kind of following and commitment.

**RESPOND** throughout this week by **FOLLOWING**

- Take 5 minutes to sit with God in silence with this request: "God, show me how I can FOLLOW YOU to LIFT OTHERS." And then journal what you hear.

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- Doing so, you will be creating space for Jesus to do what only Jesus can do—transform a life. When you gather next week, let your group know where God led you, so they can lift that person to Jesus all the more in prayer and celebrate God’s goodness with you.

- EXHALE | May I Follow



SERMON NOTES

## TRUSTING GOD'S PROMISES

**PREPARE** through this week's breath prayer

**INHALE** | May I Trust You

## EXHALE | More Than My Worries

RECEIVE | Malachi 3:10–12 &amp; Matthew 6:25–32

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**JOURNAL your response to the message**

Jesus, I feel

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**RESPONDING to the message**

- TABLE TALK | At a meal this week, discuss this question with those around the table: **Which of the worries from Matthew 6 do you tend to get stuck on most? Why do you think this is?**
- Text, email or post to your small group or social media sites one big idea from this week's message that has stayed with you.
- Prepare for small group by reviewing the related questions.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

### PREPARE

A. Pray together this week's breath prayer.

**INHALE | May We Trust You**      **EXHALE | More Than Our Worries**

B. Share how you completed the journaling prompt at the end of this weekend's worship service.

C. Ice breaker questions: What is something that worried you as a child that is no longer a worry for you? Why do you think that has changed?

### RECEIVE

**Slowly and prayerfully read or listen to Malachi 3:10–12 & Matthew 6:25-32 twice.** Begin and end each reading with a few moments of silence. In the quiet, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into knowing and living what you are to receive from this passage of Scripture.

### REFLECT

1. What are the specific examples of God's promises indicated in today's Bible passages?

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2. Why would God ask us to trust Him more than our wealth?

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3. How do these passages describe who God is? What aspects of God's character allow His promises to be dependable?

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4. There are consequences and ramifications for all our choices, right? So if we do not trust God with our money, what's the consequence of that? How would not trusting God impact your life and faith and relationship with others?

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5. How do you think worry is affecting you emotionally, physically and spiritually?

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6. From the Matthew passage, what does Jesus want us to understand as we observe nature around us?

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7. In light of these passages, what motivates how we value, manage and use our money?

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## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

### REFOCUS

Close by praying out loud together Psalm 23 from *The Message* translation.

God, Our shepherd! We don't need a thing.  
You have bedded us down in lush meadows,  
You find us quiet pools to drink from.  
True to Your Word, You let us catch our breath  
and send us in the right direction.

Even when the way goes through Death Valley,  
We are not afraid because You walk by our side.  
Your trusty shepherd's crook makes us feel secure.

You serve us a six-course dinner right in front of our enemies.  
You revive our drooping heads; our cups brim with blessing.

Your beauty and love chase after us every day of our lives.  
We're back home in the house of God for the rest of our lives.

### RESPOND throughout this week by TRUSTING

- Take 5 minutes to sit with God in silence with this request: "God, show me how I can trust You to LIFT others." And then journal what you hear.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

**INHALE** | May I Trust You      **EXHALE** | More Than My Worries

- Help LIFT others by gently offering this practice of breath prayer to them, as you hear them share their worries.

**INHALE** | May \_\_\_\_\_ Trust You

## EXHALE | More Than His/Her Worries

**PREPARE** through this week's breath prayer

**INHALE** | May Your Kingdom

**EXHALE** | Be My Priority

**RECEIVE** | Matthew 6:1–24, 33 & Matthew 19:16–30

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## JOURNAL your response to the message

Jesus, I feel

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## RESPONDING to the message

- TABLE TALK | At a meal this week, discuss this question with those around the table: **If you were the rich, young man's friends, what advice would you give him as he walked away from Jesus?**
- Text, email or post to your small group or social media sites one big idea from this week's message that has stayed with you.
- Prepare for small group by reviewing the related questions.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

### PREPARE

A. Pray together this week's breath prayer.

**INHALE | May Your Kingdom**

**EXHALE | Be Our Priority**

B. Share how you completed the journaling prompt at the end of this weekend's worship service?

C. Ice breaker question: When you wake up each morning, what are your top three priorities?

### RECEIVE

**Slowly and prayerfully read or listen to Matthew 6:19–24, 33 & Matthew 19:16–30 twice.** Begin and end each reading with a few moments of silence. In the quiet, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into knowing and living what you are to receive from this passage of Scripture.

### REFLECT

1. How can you discern a person's priorities? Share at least three of your observations, be as specific as possible.

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2. Today's first reading contrasts serving God and serving money. What does serving money look like?

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3. Both passages mention storing up treasure in heaven in contrast to storing up (or hoarding) material wealth. What does "storing up treasure in heaven" look like?

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4. What do we learn about God's character in these passages? Who are we able to become because of who God is?

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5. What captivates you the most from the Matthew 19 story?

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6. How can we determine where our treasure is?

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7. Why prioritize God and God's Kingdom instead of ourselves and our own kingdom?

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## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

8. What inhibits you from prioritizing God's Kingdom? Why?

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9. Look up today's Scripture passages in *The Message* version and one additional translation. What insights do these versions give you about Jesus' teaching?

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### REFOCUS

Close by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,  
for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.  
Amen.

**RESPOND** throughout this week by **PRIORITIZING** God's Kingdom

- Take 5 minutes to sit with God in silence with this request: "God show me how I can prioritize Your Kingdom to LIFT others." And then journal what you hear.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

- Each morning, before you get out of bed, start your day by reciting the Lord's Prayer. That way even before your feet hit the floor you are prioritizing God's Kingdom.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

**INHALE** | May Your Kingdom

**EXHALE | Be My Priority**

SERMON NOTES

## SURRENDERING TO GOD & HIS PASSION TO LIFT OTHERS

**PREPARE** through this week's breath prayer

**INHALE | May | Surrender**

## EXHALE | So You Can LIFT

RECEIVE | 2 Corinthians 8:1–12

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## JOURNAL your response to the message

Jesus, I feel

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## RESPONDING to the message

- TABLE TALK | At a meal this week, discuss this question with those around the table: **What most surprised you about the Macedonian church?**
- Text, email or post to your small group or social media sites one big idea from this week's message that has stayed with you.
- Prepare for your small group by reviewing the related questions.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

### PREPARE

A. Pray together this week's breath prayer.

**INHALE | May We Surrender**

**EXHALE | So You Can LIFT**

B. Share how you completed the journaling prompt at the end of this weekend's worship service?

C. Ice Breaker question: Describe the most generous person you know. What is it about them that makes them generous?

### RECEIVE

**Slowly and prayerfully read or listen to 2 Corinthians 8:1–12 twice.**

Begin and end each reading with a few moments of silence. In the quiet, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into knowing and living what you are to receive from this passage of Scripture.

### REFLECT

1. What three things did the Macedonian followers of Jesus do that impressed the Apostle Paul? What does that reveal about their faith?

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2. "...for your sake [Jesus] became poor." How does Jesus model surrender for His people? How does Jesus' surrender show us God's passion to lift us up?

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3. In verse 7, Paul uses the words “excel in the grace of giving.”  
What do you think Paul means by using grace in relation to giving?

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4. How does giving of ourselves (e.g., with our time, energies, skills and finances) embody surrendering to God?

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5. What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us?” Restate this in your own words. Perhaps read different translations for insight.

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## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

6. What might that mean for us in how we go about giving?

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7. What is Paul getting at when he encourages the Corinthians to “finish the work” by linking willingness with completion?

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8. What do you feel as you read verses 8–9? Guilt? Excitement? Anger? Joy? Hope? Motivated? Explain your feelings.

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## REFOCUS

Pray the following based on the classic prayer of St. Francis. One person prays out the light text, the group prays out the bold together.

**Lord, make us a channel of Your peace.**  
Where there is hatred, **let us bring Your love;**  
Where there is injury, **Your pardon;**  
Where there is doubt, **true faith in You.**  
Where there is despair in life, **let us bring hope;**  
Where there is darkness, **only light;**  
Where there is sadness, **ever joy.**  
**Grant that we may never cease so much**  
**to be consoled as to console;**  
To be understood, **as to understand,**  
To be loved, **as to love with all our soul.**  
It is in pardoning, **that we are pardoned,**  
In giving **to all that we receive,**  
and in dying that **we are born to eternal life.**  
**In the name of Jesus we pray and follow,**  
**Amen.**

## RESPOND throughout this week by SURRENDERING

- Take 5 minutes to sit with God in silence with this request: "God show me how I can surrender my life, my time, my talents and my resources to You to LIFT others." And then journal what you hear.

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- This week, choose one new way to surrender your time, talents or resources in order to partner with God to LIFT someone around you. Journal about it and then share with your group about your experience.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

**INHALE | May I Surrender**

**EXHALE | So You Can LIFT**

RECEIVE | Matthew 27:32–56

## JOURNAL your response to the message

Jesus, I feel

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## RESPONDING to the message

- TABLE TALK | At a meal this week, discuss this question with those around the table: **"How have you completed the journal prompt to this Sunday's message?"**
- Text, email or post to your small group or social media sites one big idea from this week's message that has stayed with you.
- Prepare for your small group by reviewing the related questions.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

# ● GROUP DISCUSSION

## PREPARE

A. Pray together this week's breath prayer.

**INHALE | To Your Vision**

**EXHALE | Empower Us to Commit**

B. Share how you completed the journaling prompt at the end of this weekend's worship service?

C. Ice breaker question: What causes you to be more inclined to help someone in need?

## RECEIVE

**Slowly and prayerfully read or listen to Matthew 27:32–55 twice.** Begin and end each reading with a few moments of silence. In the quiet, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into knowing and living what you are to receive from this passage of Scripture.

## REFLECT

1. What were the different responses of the various people on the scene of Jesus' crucifixion? Placing yourself in their sandals, why did they respond the way they did?

- Jewish religious leaders
- General crowd
- Rebels beside Jesus
- Roman guards
- The group of women disciples
- Simon of Cyrene

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2. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry a cross. Jesus willingly embraced the cross. When do you feel like Simon? And when do you willingly embrace burdens on behalf of others?

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3. How do you feel knowing that Jesus went through this type of rejection and abuse for you?

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4. What "cross" (burden, problem, hardship, grief) can you help someone bear this coming week?

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5. When you reflect on Jesus giving His life so you may have life, now and eternally, what stirs in you? What emotions or questions are most prominent? Why?

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## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

6. In what ways can you show your gratitude to Jesus for going to the cross so you can have a flourishing life now and into eternity?

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### REFOCUS

Close your group this week by praying together this prayer from Soren Kierkegaard.

Dear Lord,  
Don't hold my sins against me,  
But hold me up against my sins.  
When my soul becomes aware of You  
and each time I am awakened,  
may I be reminded,  
not of my sin but of Your forgiveness.

**RESPOND** throughout this week by **COMMITTING**

- Take 5 minutes to sit with God in silence with this request: “God show me how I can commit to Your vision and demonstrate Your form of power, regardless of how I feel, so I may LIFT others.” And then journal what you hear.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

- Reflect on what you must lay down in order to LIFT others.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

## INHALE | To Your Vision

## EXHALE | Empower Me to Commit

## RECEIVE | Acts 2:42–47

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## JOURNAL your response to the message

Jesus, I feel

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about

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## RESPONDING to the message

- TABLE TALK | At a meal this week, discuss this question with those around the table: **How do you think it felt to be part of the Acts 2 church we heard about in Sunday's message? Why?**
- Journal your response to the message.
- Text, email or post to your small group or social media sites one big idea from this week's message that has stayed with you.
- Prepare for your small group by reviewing the related questions.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

### PREPARE

A. Pray together this week's breath prayer.

**INHALE | Lord We Dedicate Ourselves**    **EXHALE | To LIFTing Others**

B. Share how you completed the journaling prompt at the end of this weekend's worship service?

C. Ice breaker questions: What's something you have that you enjoy sharing with others? What's something you have that is hard for you to share? Why do you feel differently about the two?

### RECEIVE

**Slowly and prayerfully read or listen to Acts 2:42–47 twice.**

Begin and end each reading with a few moments of silence.

In the quiet, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into knowing and living what you are to receive from this passage of Scripture.

### REFLECT

1. What excites you about being part of a flourishing church community?

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2. In today's passage, the early church is brand new and they are vibrant! Why is generosity and selfless giving associated with this season of blessing?

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3. Do you think there was a correlation between the various spiritual practices they engaged with and their generosity? Why or why not?

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4. What is God doing that frees these first Christ-followers to be so generous?

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5. In the past 5 weeks, we looked at following, trusting, prioritizing, surrendering, and committing. We also reflected on various Bible passages to help us understand how these priorities relate to our relationship with God. Do you notice these priorities illustrated in today's passage? If so, where and how?

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6. Where is money or material wealth in the life of the early church? What is their relationship to their money? How do we see wealth used?

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## ● GROUP DISCUSSION

7. In light of this passage, how could we use our current material wealth to LIFT others?

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### REFOCUS

Close your group this week by praying together this prayer from Henri Nouwen.

Dear God,  
I am so afraid to open my clenched fists!  
Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to?  
Who will I be when I stand before You with empty hands?  
Please help me to gradually open my hands  
and to discover that I am not what I own,  
but what You want to give me.

Henri J. M. Nouwen  
*The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life*



## RESPOND throughout this week by Following

- Take 5 minutes to sit with God in silence with this request: “God show me how I can dedicate myself to LIFTing others.” And then journal what you hear.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

- Following the example of the Acts 2 Church, what is something of yours you can sell and then talk with Jesus about where to give the funds? Share with your group what you discover in the process.
- Pray this week's breath prayer every day.

**INHALE** | Lord I Dedicate Myself      **EXHALE** | To LIFTing Others



### **What are you asking me to do in this initiative?**

First and foremost, we are asking that you pray and seek God's leading on what He is asking of you. Prepare your heart to hear Him, and then listen to what He says. Join a small group. Talk with a trusted friend or, if you're married and have children, talk together about what this commitment will mean for this next season. We are asking that you make a sacrificial commitment so we can LIFT others through our generosity.

### **How long is my commitment?**

We are asking everyone who calls Christ Church their church home to make a two-year commitment—24 months of giving. The fulfillment period for commitments begins on January 1, 2023 and concludes December 31, 2024. Every gift given during this time will go toward the Christ Church fund to support our LIFT vision.

### **What if I am brand new to Christ Church?**

LIFT is about the vision God has for our church family. We believe that the local church is one of the most compelling missions to give toward, and we would really love for you to make Christ Church your home. If you are ready for it, this is a perfect time for you to put a stake in the ground and make this your church. We need you!

### **What if I have not been a regular giver to Christ Church before?**

If you have never before or only occasionally given financially to Christ Church, LIFT was crafted as a wonderful opportunity to see how God will use your gifts for Kingdom impact and how your obedience will transform you. LIFT is a whole-church generosity initiative and is a call to radical, sacrificial giving for absolutely everyone at Christ Church.

## **What's the purpose of a stewardship initiative?**

### **Don't we have enough funds already?**

Stewardship initiatives serve several important purposes:

1. They provide a high-profile focal point for stewardship education, reflection and commitment. This is valuable to all of us but especially important for the many hundreds of people who have come into the life of Christ Church since 2016. LIFT will help many households move closer to Christ and His Kingdom's purposes.
2. They help us raise monies over-and-above our annual budget to address special needs and opportunities. Our annual budget covers the cost of the routine operations of our church and its ministries of worship, growth and service. Our "normal" budget, however, doesn't cover the major renovations or special projects that make for a truly thriving church.

## **Why are we doing another stewardship initiative?**

### **Didn't we just finish Take Root?**

For most of Christ Church's history, we have conducted a stewardship initiative approximately every three years. We launched our last such initiative (Take Root) in 2016—seven years ago. That stewardship initiative concluded in 2018—five years from the start of the public phase of our LIFT initiative.

## **Why are we doing a stewardship initiative in light of the current economy?**

In the wake of a pandemic and amid the heavy pressures of our times, a vitalized Church is needed more than ever. While we are aware of the current economic conditions, we also know there will always be challenging times. For many of us it is easier to give when things are good—it can be during times like this, when we put more of our faith and trust in Jesus, that He is glorified and we grow. We trust that each individual and family will prayerfully seek God's direction and follow His leading, in addition to evaluating financial priorities. Please know that we will also be assessing our priorities as we see what offering the people of our church provide.



This is indeed a time when our faith is tested. At the same time, this is a good moment to remember a larger picture.

- The story of the Christian church is one of faith and generosity even during times when conditions have been hard (read Acts 2:44–47; 2 Corinthians 8:1–15; 9:6–15).
- We see this “New Testament” kind of commitment being exercised by our mission partners all over the world under conditions considerably tougher than we endure in the United States.
- We still live in the most materially blessed nation in human history. Since the start of our last stewardship initiative in 2016—when many of us took a leap of faith and increased our giving— the stock market has increased by nearly 125%. That’s an annualized return of 13.25%. When we factor in inflation, it is still a gain of 82%.

### **Can I designate giving to one project?**

Just like our regular giving, we are asking people to generously respond to the full LIFT vision over the next two years through our Christ Church fund. Our leadership has been entrusted with the responsibility of prioritizing spending on the new initiatives and management of the funds and will do so with great care and stewardship of the resources that are given. Please reach out to David Melvin, Executive Director of Ministry Resources, at 630.321.6785 or [dmelvin@ChristChurch.us](mailto:dmelvin@ChristChurch.us) if you have additional questions or would like to discuss this further.

### **In addition to cash, are there other ways I can give more to the LIFT initiative?**

Be prayerful and creative as you explore ways you can give to the initiative. You might have stock, property, or other items of value. You may have stored resources that God has blessed you with in the past that He is calling you to give out of during this time.

Please contact Jay Schommer at [jschommer@ChristChurch.us](mailto:jschommer@ChristChurch.us), 630.321.3902 or visit the Ways to Give page on our website to give or learn more about non-cash gifts.

**We took on debt from the previous stewardship initiative.  
Will we take on more debt or scale back the vision if we  
don't reach our financial goal?**

The goal for the LIFT initiative is to reduce debt NOT add to it. The current plan is to pay down our debt by an additional \$2 million dollars in addition to our regularly scheduled principal and interest payments. As with all elements of the LIFT vision, our ability to accomplish all the objectives will depend on how God works in the hearts of the people of Christ Church. We fully trust in God's sovereignty through God's people to accomplish God's vision through this LIFT initiative. We will be faithful in stewarding and utilizing all that God provides to that end.

**I am uncomfortable when we focus so much attention on money.  
Can you help me?**

Jesus spoke about generosity more than any other topic in Scripture. Not only does Jesus talk about giving, He instructs us how much to give. Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Generosity is about more than just money. It is about our heart posture and living a life clearly committed to Christ.

**In addition to a financial commitment, how else can I participate  
in LIFT?**

We want everyone at Christ Church to engage on a transformative spiritual journey through LIFT by praying, studying Scripture, participating in small group life and engaging others in the journey. Consider sharing your story with others. Join or lead a group. Serve faithfully or for the first time.

Take the next step in your journey of discipleship and see what God does.

**Additional questions?**

For more information, visit **LiftTogether.us**. You may also feel free to reach out to Dave Melvin, Director of Ministry Resources, who is available to answer any further questions you may have. He can be reached at 630.321.6785 and [dmelvin@ChristChurch.us](mailto:dmelvin@ChristChurch.us).

## HEAVENLY FATHER,

We praise Your holy name, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

You offer us unfailing faithfulness, perfect love and unending grace.

You are worthy of our adoration and praise!

Thank You for the ultimate gift in Jesus Christ, who through His life, death and resurrection lifted us out of our sin and shame, offering us a grace greater than the gravity of life.

Father, this world is aching, confused and seemingly hopeless.

We seek Your will, Father.

We lift our eyes to You, Lord, for You are our helper and provider.

You raise the poor from the dust and lift the needy from the ash heap.

Ignite in us an insatiable hunger to LIFT those who are hurting or in need of hope in Jesus' holy and powerful name.

Thank You for this church, Your body at work.

You have trusted us with much.

Grant us the courage to respond boldly to Your call to invest the gifts of time, talent and treasure You've given us to LIFT others who so desperately need You, both locally and globally.

Gracious Lord, we ask You to take Your rightful place on the throne of our lives and make us a remarkably generous, kingdom-impacting people.

All glory and honor and praise to You, our good and faithful Father!

## AMEN.



## LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFT

**LiftTogether.us**

## IMPORTANT DATES

### **Advance Commitment Night**

Friday, January 27 | Oak Brook

### **Commitment Sunday**

Sunday, February 12



OAK BROOK | 501 Oak Brook Rd., Oak Brook | 630.654.1882

BUTTERFIELD | 2S361 Glen Park Rd., Lombard | 630.654.1884

LiftTogether.us

Scan the  
QR code to  
learn more  
about LIFT.

