

Pastor's Annual Report for the year 2019

(adapted from the "State of the Church Address" delivered Sunday morning, January 19, 2020, Pastor Brad Brandt)

"I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house."

Acts 20:20

A 20:20 Ministry in 2020

I'd like to begin this year's state of the church address with a story, our story. Back in October 1987 the Lord directed my steps, along with my wife Sherry and our one year old daughter Julie, to become your pastor. Wheelersburg Baptist Church was 109 years old, established in 1878. I had just finished four years of undergrad work at Cedarville with a degree in pre-seminary Bible, followed by four years at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary with a master's degree in pastoral studies and a second master's degree in Old Testament studies. I believed the Bible was the inerrant, infallible, trustworthy Word of God and was committed to preaching it, making disciples by it, equipping this church to live by it.

But soon after something began to happen. People began coming to me, saying things like, "Pastor, we're having marriage problems. Can you help us?" And, "Pastor, I've been told I'm bi-polar. What should I do?" And "Pastor, they say our child has ADHD, and we're overwhelmed. Can you help?"

I would respond by listening, praying with them, and expressing my concern and support, but that was about it. And I watched a couple of things happen. One, some strugglers went outside the church for help from the "professionals." Unfortunately, though well-meaning I'm sure, this "professional" help didn't increase the hurting person's confidence in Christ, His Word, and His church, but in fact often undermined this confidence.

A second outcome I observed was that hurting people just continued to limp along in isolation. They received no help, convinced that there was no help available.

After seven years of pastoring this way, I knew something needed to change. I needed to change. I was called by God to shepherd people and I wasn't doing it. I didn't know how to do it, even though I could parse Greek and Hebrew Bible verses.

But it was more personal than that. I didn't know how to deal with problems in my own life. My standard answer when I walked through the door of my home in the evening, when asked by my wife, "How was your day?", was, "Fine, dear. It was *fine*." It didn't matter if I'd been putting out church fires all day. Everything was always *fine*. I thought that's what the good Christian response was. Just be positive. Don't get angry. Things will work out. But they didn't.

Please don't misunderstand. The church was growing. One year in the early 90s we averaged over 220 on Sunday mornings, with 350 in attendance on that Easter. We had tons of programs, and activities for all ages, with lots of people involved. But something seemed amiss. In reality a storm was brewing.

It was at the same time that, in God's incredible kindness, I learned about a biblical counseling training opportunity in the Dayton area. It was 1995, and for twelve weeks I drove to Clearcreek Chapel every Monday to learn from three pastors what the Bible had to say about the real problems my people were experiencing, that I was

experiencing. That was a tough stretch—leaving the house at 6 am, sitting through lectures in the morning, doing case studies in the afternoon, followed by observing biblical counselors in action in the evening, and then driving home, pulling in the driveway somewhere between 9 and 11 pm. It was tough...and life-changing.

A pastor friend of mine recently said, “I wouldn’t be in the ministry today if it hadn’t been for biblical counseling training.” I would agree. That practical course opened my eyes to the reality that God’s Word is not only inerrant and authoritative, but *sufficient* to deal with the complex challenges hurting people are facing.

That produced a series of changes, starting with me and our family. I learned from God’s Word how I could, instead of clamming up, learn how to deal with problems God’s way. I learned there is no such thing as a problem free life, or family, or church, that God’s kind of life, family, and church is one that deals with its problems His way, and He shows us what His way is in this Book.

Next it began to change this church. I couldn’t keep what I was learning to myself, so on Sunday evenings I began a series, “Biblical Answers for the Problems of Life.” We learned together what the Bible says about marriage, parenting, fear, worry, depression, and much more. I also began to do biblical counseling with people in the church and community, and went through the process to become certified with what is now the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

Good things were happening, but not everyone was pleased. In 1998 our church went through a firestorm and by the time the flames subsided, we had lost one-third of our members. There were many contributing factors (differences over doctrine, music, methodology, etc), but at the root it had to do with this clarifying question.

Are we going to be a truly biblical church, or not? That is, do we believe this Book is sufficient, or not? Will we deal with our problems by this Book, or not? Will we lay aside our Baptist-subculture-expectations and affirm that this Book is the key to life and godliness, or not?

We looked like a severely pruned tree after the departures finally stopped. It was painful, and frankly in a very real sense, still is. But as is the case with a pruned tree, we as a pruned church were now ready for a remarkable season of fruit-bearing that not one of us could have anticipated.

The pruning went on for two years. In 2000 we realized that we had something that we as a church could not keep to ourselves. So, we began our first year of biblical counseling training. I believe there were 55 people from nine area churches in that first class. The next year we offered a second track. The next year we began offering an advanced track as well as continuing our fundamentals track. Eventually others in the WBC family began counseling and teaching. We started going on the road to do CDTs in other places, even overseas.

To date we’ve had approximately 500 people from 50 or so churches participate in our courses. I don’t even know the numbers for sure, for they don’t really matter, a lesson the Lord has been teaching me for three decades.

Ministry is all about His glory, and His glory is manifest when He works through weak vessels like us to accomplish His eternally significant plan to transform hurting sinners into His Son’s likeness. Our counseling team has been offering free counseling to the Tri-State region for twenty years now. And those we’ve trained in other churches are part of this team. Dozens of people every year are finding hope from the Scriptures. Marriages are being restored. People struggling with depression, fears, and anxieties are learning to experience the joy of Christlikeness in their struggles. To God be the glory!

And yet...there are hundreds, yes thousands in the Tri-State, who don't even know that such help is available. That's why, more than ever, we need to pour our energies into a 20:20 ministry at WBC and beyond.

It was back in 1995 at Clearcreek Chapel that I began to have this burden for a 20:20 ministry at WBC. I've been talking about it ever since, with every counseling class, in many conversations. And because I'm convinced it's as essential now as ever before, I want to lay it before you as a challenge for 2020.

What's a 20:20 ministry? It's the kind of ministry the apostle Paul said he was willing to die for, which he described in Acts 20:20. "*I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.*"

You know what 20:20 vision is. Well this is Acts 20:20 vision. It's what motivated Paul to do what he did when he went to Ephesus and everywhere else. He said there was a need for the ministry of the Word on two fronts.

There's the public ministry of the Word. That's what happens here on Sunday mornings, and with our preachers in training on Sunday evenings, and in our Wednesday evening Bible studies, Sunday School, etc.

But there's also the private, one on one, one on two, house to house ministry of the Word. That's discipleship, which according to Jesus is "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matt 28:19-20)." And when the disciple is struggling, it becomes targeted discipleship, which is what counseling is.

Paul engaged in this twofold ministry of the Word, and so must we. And so *are* we at WBC, by God's grace and for His glory. And the opportunities are greater now than ever before.

Let's take some time now to look back at 2019, and to look ahead to 2020. Let's celebrate what God has accomplished through a 20:20 focus in 2019, and prepare ourselves for some new opportunities in 2020. I believe a walk through the surrounding context of Acts 20 will help us do that.

In Acts 20 Paul is meeting with a group of men he loves dearly. These are the elders of the church in Ephesus. He had led some of them to faith in Christ during his three years there, and he poured his life into teaching all of them the Scriptures. According to Acts 19:9-10 he had daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus which lasted for two years, "so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord."

Now he's calling a special meeting with them because he'll never see them again. This is a perfect text for the state of the church. It's an assessment text. Paul talks about, *what I did, what happened, what will happen*, as well as, *what you did*, and *what you need to do in the future*.

What does a successful ministry look like? We see it right here. In shorthand, it's a 20:20 ministry. What does it take to have a 20:20 ministry? As we walk with Paul through this passage, we see the answer. A 20:20 ministry is the following. I've counted 14 marks.

1. Marked by transparency – Verse 18, "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you." In fact, Paul uses this verb "know" again and again in his conversation with the elders. "You know how I lived (18-19)." "You know what I preached (20-21)." "I don't know what will happen to me (22)." "I know hardships are facing me (23)." "I

know none of you will ever see me again (25).” “I know that salvage wolves will come in among you (29).” Paul was an open book, and we must be the same in ministry.

You know how I lived, says Paul. I’m thankful for the leadership team that God raised up at WBC in 2019, deacons (Matt, Dave, Greg, Jack, Ken, and Ed), trustees (Randy, Dennis, and Joe), and a pastoral team (including interns Douglas and Austin, and our office assistant Wilma), who make it a priority to say, “You know how I lived.” And when how we live falls short of Christlikeness, as inevitably happens at times for sinners, we confess our shortcomings, and with the cross in view, work at making the necessary changes. That’s 20:20 ministry.

2. Theo-centric, that is, God-centered and God-focused – Verse 19, “I served *the Lord*.” Yes, Paul served people, making great sacrifices for them. But that was just a natural result of something that was settled the day he was saved. Since the Lord saved him, he served one master, the Lord Himself. That’s why he could lay down his life for people, even if they responded in anger and hostility, which they often did. Successful ministry is God-focused, God-centered, God-exalting, no matter what.

By God’s grace, this too characterizes WBC. I see it when our members choose to do difficult things out of a desire to please an audience of One. I think of our Kids Club workers and youth leaders who refuse to give up on hard to love young people, of spouses who work hard to see Christ exalted in tough marriages, of members who exhibit joy in thankless job situations. What keeps them going? The resolve to live a Theo-centric life. *I served the Lord*.

3. Marked by humility – Verse 19b, “I served the Lord *with great humility and with tears*.” If getting the credit matters to you, if recognition matters to you, if visible results matter to you, you will not experience the long-term joy that Paul experienced in ministry. God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

“I’m a proud man pursuing humility by the grace of God.” That’s the testimony of CJ Mahaney as he begins his book, *Humility: True Greatness*. That’s also the testimony of this church. “We are proud people pursuing humility by the grace of God.”

“Humility,” explains Mahaney, “is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.”¹ That’s what we do every time we meet as a church and open the Book. We honestly assess ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.

I saw humility in 2019 when people gave gifts, and did deeds of service, and wanted no one else to know about it. I saw humility when there was conflict between people, and rather than accusing, watched people work hard to get the log out of their own eyes first. It’s such a joy to be part of a church that highly esteems what God highly esteems. *Humility*.

4. Tested by opposition – Verse 19c, “I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, *although I was severely tested by the Jews*.” Having a 20:20 ministry is war, for there will be opposition. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, Paul says elsewhere. “Woe to you when all speak well of you,” said Jesus in Luke 6:26. “There have to be differences among you,” said Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:19, “to show which of you have God’s approval.”

¹ CJ Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*, pp. 13, 22.

We had conflict in 2019, and will in 2020. It's part of God's *testing* process. Every time the Lord allows us to face opposition, or a difference of opinion, He's actually seeking to mature us. He's giving us the opportunity to decide, "Will we respond to this in a Christlike biblical way, or not?" This biblical resolve is the reflection of a 20:20 ministry, and it's a great joy to see this resolve growing in this body.

5. Intentional about making the Word known – Verse 20, "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house." Notice that the ministry of the Word, when done rightly, is *comprehensive* ("I have not hesitated to preach *anything*") and *helpful*, that is, it results in helping the hearers. It also takes place in a variety of ways (publicly and house to house).

Making the Word known is a team effort at WBC. I'm grateful for Matt Wilson, Dave Beam, Scott Bruns, and others who participated in the pulpit ministry of God's Word last year. I'm also very encouraged by our Preachers in Training ministry that continued for year three on Sunday evenings, with a dozen of our brothers taking us through the book of Philippians in the summer and fall. It's a privilege to see the Lord raising up new expositors of His Word.

Every Sunday WBC makes the Word known from this pulpit. On *Sunday mornings* we began the year with a series, "Amazing Grace," looking at several grace-texts in the Bible. Another topical series followed in March, "Up to Jerusalem: Heading to the Cross," to help us prepare for Passion week. Then we launched into Jesus' sermon on the mount, working our way through the beatitudes in the spring and summer. This led into a series on end times from Mark 13 in August, then back into the sermon on the mount in September, and a follow-up mini-series on being "The Light of the World" in October and November. We finished the year with a Christmas series from Luke 2. The Lord willing, we'll be returning to the sermon on the mount this year, as well as continuing our journey through Acts at some point.

On *Sunday evenings*, we did a variety of things. In addition to preachers in training on second Sundays, we discussed the implications of the morning sermon in community groups. In July we participated in Scioto Hills family camp chapel, had an outdoor service Labor Day weekend, enjoyed the Christmas program in December.

On *Wednesday evenings* we finished a series on the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, then spent the majority of the year in an inductive study of the practical message of 1 John.

Additionally, a devoted team of servants made the Word known through Sunday School, our Wednesday evening Kids club ministry, VBS, and our youth ministry. Our counseling team taught Jesus-followers from a dozen churches in our winter Monday evening CDT, this year adding a new advanced track focused on marriage counseling.

This is the heartbeat of a 20:20 ministry, making the Word known publicly and house to house. Praise God for how He's bringing that about at WBC!

6. Pursues the proper gospel outcome – Verse 21, "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus." When Paul presented the gospel, he wasn't after mere "decisions for Christ," nor should we be. A decisional approach to evangelism is producing short-term increase and long-term devastation in Christ's church in America. Paul did not settle for short-term increase. He said his goal, every time he ministered the Word, was to see people turn to God in repentance and faith. That is the proper gospel outcome.

I'd like to remind you of something I shared in last year's state of the church address. As far as statistics go, we are an average size church. According to a study from the Hartford Institute for Religious Research, most American churches now have fewer than 100 in weekend worship attendance, and half of all American churches have a weekend attendance of 80 or less.² Our current membership is 138. Our weekly Sunday morning average attendance for the year 2019 was 101 (50 on Sunday evening, and 49 on Wednesday evening). In 2018 the number was 102 (PM 47, Wed PM 38). So, our average went down one person on Sunday morning and went up three on Sunday evening.

But we cannot measure a church's success merely by the number of people in the seats. The desired outcome is to see the people in those seats exhibit repentance and faith, or to put it another way, to get out of those seats and start living differently because they truly believe in the One who gave His life for them.

One of the ways repentance shows up most clearly is *money*. When I turn to God in repentance, I do a 180 and start spending my money differently than I used to, for God's agenda rather than mine.

And that's what's been happening at WBC. Here's a significant number. \$241,352. That's the general fund income for 2019, and it exceeded expenses by nearly \$16,000. That means the Lord more than provided for our needs once again. But He didn't just provide, for the \$241k figure is the second highest in the history of WBC.

Let that sink in. Less people. Second highest year of giving in our history.³ What does that mean? I see it as evidence, proper-gospel-outcome evidence. It's repentance and faith in living color, all by His grace and to His glory.

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

7. Willing to embrace suffering as a means to greater joy – Verses 22-23, "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me."

From a worldly perspective, this doesn't make sense. Avoid suffering, now that makes sense. But embrace it? Intentionally go where you know you will face hardship? Who in the world does that? Those with a 20:20 focus do. They embrace suffering because they know God works through it.

We saw that this past year. In June the Lord brought to us a man, Craig Strickland, who just found out he was dying of cancer. We were privileged to nurture his

² <https://factsand Trends.net/2016/02/24/majority-of-american-churches-fall-below-100-in-worship-attendance/>

³ For comparison purposes, here are some giving and attendance averages from previous years:

2019 – 241,352 (weekly \$4641) – (attendance AM 101, PM 51, Wed PM 49)
2018 - 231,897 (weekly \$4459) – (attendance AM 102, PM 47, Wed PM 38)
2017 - \$234,425 (weekly \$4434) – (attendance AM 109, PM 58, Wed PM 44)
2016 - \$247,509 (weekly \$4828) – (120, 55, 47)
2015 - \$239,625 (weekly 4609) – (127, 60, 59)
2014 - \$228,253 (weekly 4367) – (124, 64, 78)
2013 - 226,507 (weekly 4355) –
2012 - 206,588 (weekly 3973) – (136, 73, 86)
2011 - 199,633 (weekly 3839) – (129, 69, 89)
2010 - 197,900 (weekly 3717) – (121, 61, 70)
2007 – 189,347 (weekly ?) – (129, 61, 74)

soul for three months, and then had his memorial service here, with many from the community coming and hearing the good news of Christ.

Not long after that we had another funeral and meal for the son of a member of our church (Fox Etta Hunt). Again, many from the community came, heard the good news of salvation through Christ, and felt its power through the love of this church.

Those of you involved in our compassion ministries know all about embracing suffering as a means to greater joy. Thank you, and be assured there will be more opportunities for this joy in 2020.

8. Consumed by one objective, to please Christ and finish well – Verse 24a, “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.”

I think of our missionary, Bob Literal. This church sent Bob to PNG in 1964 so he could invest his life in making Christ known to the Angor people and giving them the Scriptures in their heart language. God gave Bob the desire of his heart, and so much more. In 2019, after 55 years of obedient service, Bob made what is likely his final trip to PNG, “considering my life nothing to me, if only I may complete the task Jesus has given me.” That’s 20:20 ministry in action through WBC.

9. Gospel and grace focused – Verse 24b, “the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

We took time to revise our articles of faith in 2019. Why? Because theology matters, and we want to be razor sharp in articulating what we believe. As they say, “If there’s a mist in the pulpit, there will be a fog in the pew.” We unashamedly believe in the good news of God’s sovereign grace and do all we can to make it known, preaching “the whole counsel of God’s Word” as Paul says in verse 27.

Here’s an acrostic we developed to help us communicate this message.

G- God created all things for His glory.

L- Life is meant to be lived, and joy comes, when we live for His glory.

O- Our problem is sin, which is living for something short of His glory.

R- Redemption is what God has provided through Christ to rescue a people for His glorious purposes.

Y- You can now live for the glory of God, by grace alone, through faith alone in the gospel.

This is why we love missions at WBC. We can’t keep this gospel of grace to ourselves. This past January we sent Jade Burley to the Dominican Republic to begin making disciples with Freedom International. In April you sent me to teach church leaders in Beirut, Lebanon, alongside our missionaries Paul and Kathy Holritz and others.

Throughout the year we heard from missionaries Erin Wawro (Brazil), Paul and Marla Fields (transitioning from Paraguay), Mac McCaulley (Zambia), CRADLE, the Scioto Hills summer staff, Bob Litteral, Romanian Pastor Nicu Sotir, and others.

And by God’s help, this “testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” must continue in 2020. That’s what a 20:20 focus is all about, seeing lost people, and making Christ known to them.

But if all we do is minister, then when we stop, the ministry stops. What happens when we can no longer preach, serve, and give? A church with a 20:20 ministry thinks about that question a lot.

10. Committed to raising up the next generation of 20:20 ministers – Verse 28, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

There’s so much in this verse, but what I want us to see now is how diligent Paul was in preparing the next generation of gospel ministers. He had trained these elders and now challenged them to take heed to themselves and to faithful ministry in Christ’s church.

I won’t be here forever. None of us will be. The future of WBC depends, humanly speaking, on our efforts to prepare the next generation of 20:20 ministers.

Last year we invested in our two pastoral interns, Douglas Goncalves and Austin Haney. A highlight for the year took place in August when we ordained Matt Wilson, placing our hands on a next generation gospel minister. In December it was our joy to call him to become our Associate Pastor.

We have a team of a dozen men called Preachers in Training. Why? We’re seeking to raise up the next generation of 20:20 ministers. Our members who serve at Scioto Hills are all about this task of raising up the next generation.

Every time you send me and others overseas to train God’s servants, it’s with this in mind. So is what happens in our Monday evening CDT, and on Wednesday afternoons when I supervise those pursuing ACBC certification (this past year I had the joy of mentoring a person in Berlin, Germany, another in South Africa, and another who has a heart to help addicts in West Virginia). We must not only *do* ministry, but equip the next generation of 20:20 ministers.

Let me repeat a challenge I’ve offered many times before. If you have a ministry, thank the Lord for it and do it for His glory, yes. But also devote yourself to equipping the next generation of ministers. Make it your goal to prepare for the ministry to go on when you’re no longer around. Look forward to the day when you can say with Paul in verse 32, “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

What does it take to prepare the next generation of gospel ministers? We find the answer in the next set of 20:20 ministry marks that Paul models.

11. Involved in consistent one on one ministry, willing to say hard things but with a tender heart – Verse 31, “So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

So how do you raise up the next generation? Here’s how. Notice that Paul’s interaction with the next generation of shepherds was not generic but quite personal, life on life (with “each of you”). It took time (three years), not always when it was convenient either (day *and* night). And there was lots of teaching, but not just in a classroom.

I never stopped *warning* you, says Paul. That’s the Greek verb *noutheteo*, from which we get nouthetic counseling. It comes from the noun for “mind” (*nous*) and the verb “to put into” (*tithemai*), and indicates that the ministry of reproduction requires the willingness to say hard things at times (“warning,” elsewhere translated “admonishing”) but always doing so with a tender heart (“with tears”).

This will be vital in 2020. To move ahead into the gospel opportunities God is placing in front of us, we need lots of one on one nouthetic interaction with each other.

How is my ministry really doing? How could it be better? What dangers are we facing as a church? What can I do now to help God's work go forward for God's glory after I'm gone?

This is one of the reasons we've called Pastor Matt, to help us think about these kinds of questions. How can we be more strategic in making disciples in the next decade? As a pastor, Matt's role isn't to do every ministry, but to help equip the saints to do so.

One area you'll be hearing about soon is assimilation. We've been praying that God would bring new people to us, and He has been doing so. But are we as ready as we could be for more? What should happen when a single mom with three children, or an empty nest couple, or a grieving widow, or a college student, walks through our doors on a Sunday? Lots of things, from a warm greeting in the parking lot, to an invitation to Sunday School, a card in the mail, a phone call, a home visit, an invitation to a meal in one of our homes, and more. Matt's going to help us get more intentional when it comes to assimilating new people. If that's an area of ministry that appeals to you, please talk to Matt.

There's another ministry in which we see untapped potential, and that's what happens on Wednesday evenings. What's happening with the kids is great (thanks Adam and Haley and team!), but we think more can be done to use this evening for reaching and equipping adults. We're considering offering seminars in the community center (such as marriage, parenting, finances, Christianity 101, etc.). We want to reach non-churched people, care for them, introduce them to Christ, and hopefully, see them become a part of the good work God is accomplishing at WBC. If you'd like to be a part of this, see Pastor Matt.

For the sake of time, I'll just mention some other opportunities facing us in 2020.

- exploring more ways to use our community center to show this community we care about it so we can share why we care, which is the gospel.
- finishing the revision process for our by-laws
- offering an advanced track on addictions in this year's CDT to equip God's people in the Tri-State to provide biblical help for the enslaved
- working on an initiative to see ten people from WBC become ACBC certified biblical counselors in the next three years, as well as ten others from area churches
- six of our men going to T4G conference in Louisville in April
- to begin participating in Tri-M's training of church leaders in Nepal in the fall by sending Pastor Brad to teach in one or two modules

12. Committed to working hard, paying the bills, helping the weak, possessing a clear conscience – Verses 26, 33-35, “I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men...I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

With church scandals galore, this type of minister will stand out like a light in a dark sky in 2020 America. One who can say, “My conscience is clear, by God's grace. I not only did a ministry in my church, but from a heart free of ulterior motives.”

I'm so thankful for a team of servants at WBC who can say that. For a treasurer and assistant treasurer who work hard to exhibit unwavering integrity. For a nursery staff who exhibit joy in providing quality care for the little ones. For our office assistant, Wilma, who works hard in unsung ways because she knows it is more blessed to give than to receive. And for many more, by God's grace and to His glory.

13. Makes prayer a priority – Verse 36, “When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.” Why did Paul take time to pray with these men during their final time together? Because that's what they'd always done when together. A 20:20 ministry moves ahead its knees. I love the prayer times we had together in 2019. We worked through problems by praying. We saw a budget met by praying. We experienced comfort in sorrow by praying. We watched the Lord add to our number as we prayed. And we must make prayer an even greater priority in 2020.

14. Shows deep affection for people – Verses 37-38, “They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.”

This is what a 20:20 ministry produces, a growing love for God, for sure, but also for one another. We are a forever family, and ministering the Word together publicly and house to house produces deep and lasting affection for this church family.

I'm looking forward to 2020. By God's grace, we have a debt-free facility and a revised and strengthened articles of faith. We have an associate pastor to help equip us in the areas of assimilation and discipleship and to assist in shepherding needs. We have a committed, spiritually mature team of deacons, trustees, interns, and support staff. We have a wonderful variety of ages, gifts, and experiences in this congregation.

And we have, as God has worked it into the DNA of this church, a 20:20 ministry with a track record. It is our passion to make God's Word known publicly and privately, from the pulpit and in the counseling room. And for this let us all say, “To God be the glory! Great things He has done and is doing! Amen.”