

BENGTEN CHURCH

Annual Report
2025





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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

ON A YEAR OF PURSUING HEALTH

Over the last three years I have been confronted with the question, “what is Church for?” It was a question we explored together this past year from various angles—it was a year of vocation, a year of learning what it means to be the Church. I find now more than at any other point in my life I have clarity on the answer. That whatever unique flavor we might personally bring to our response, ultimately Church is about communion. God is at work to make all things new, the central piece and aim of this newness is relationship with God—it is both what makes all things whole and the end of what our wholeness is for. We are not a non-profit tasked with fixing the world. We are a community bearing witness to the divine gift of reconciliation to the One the world was made for.

But we do that by enjoying this communion ourselves. By participating in it.

There is no other place or community where this is possible—outside of church. No other place where we are wrapped up in the truth of Jesus reconciling us to God in his body and blood.

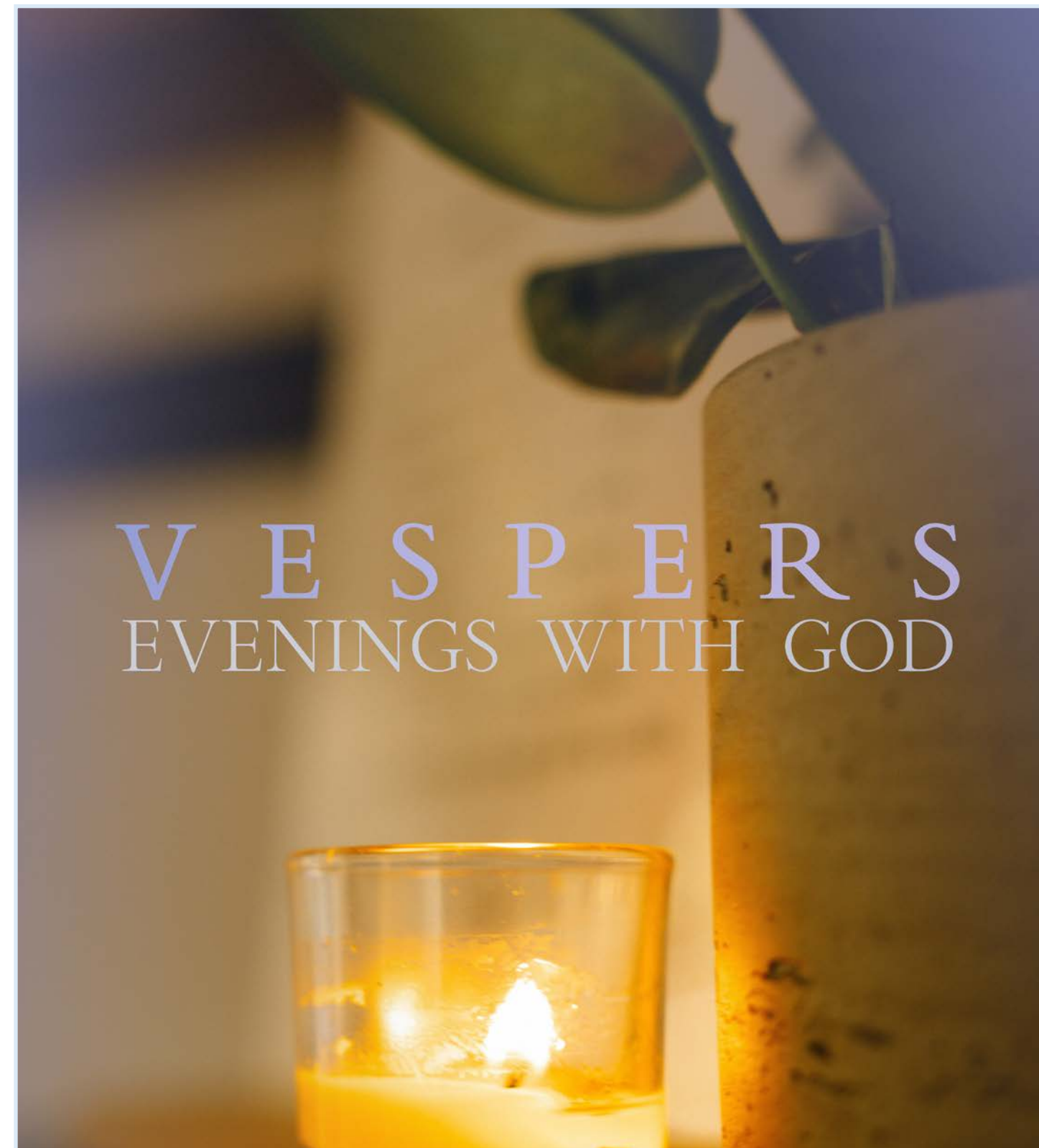
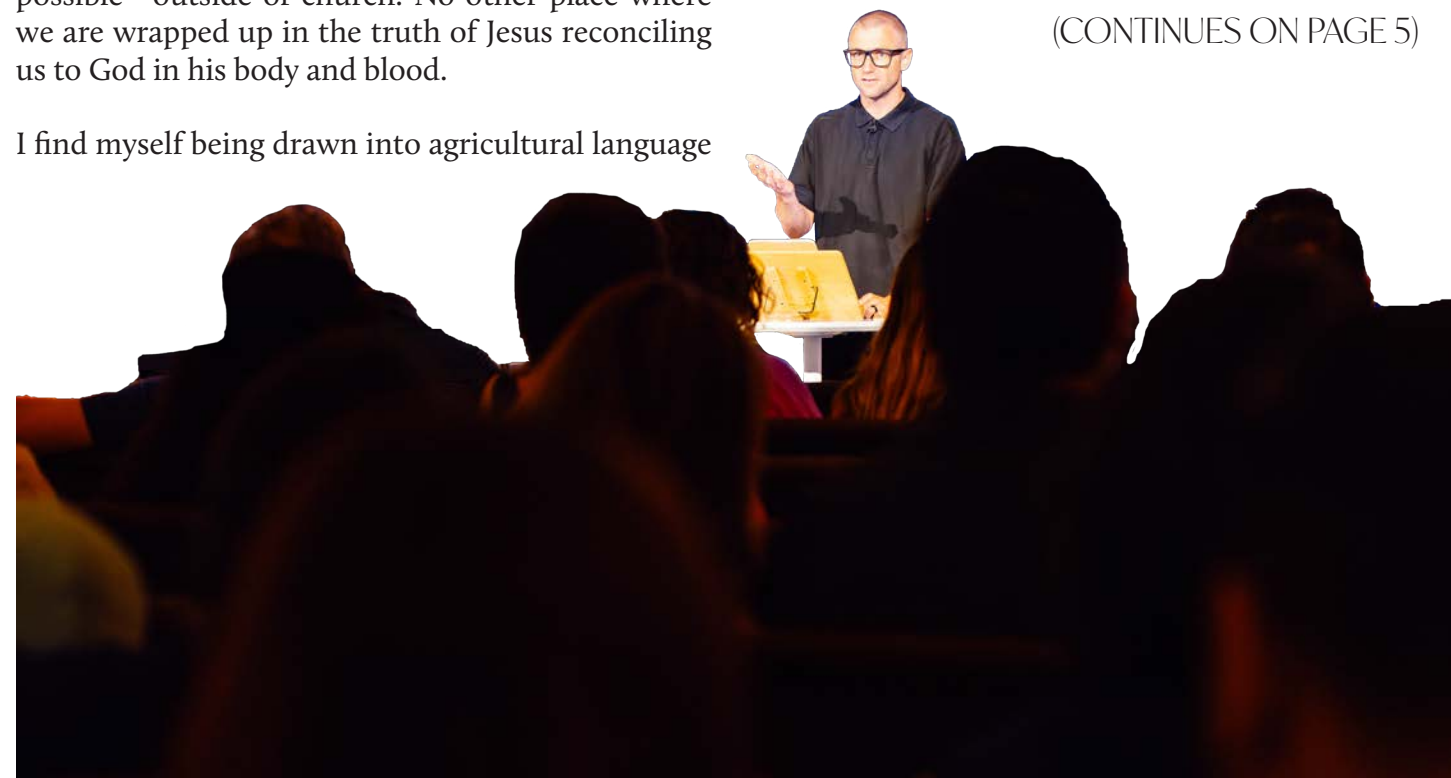
I find myself being drawn into agricultural language

these days. In a world of levers, power plays, urgency to act—there is something helpful about considering the flowers of the field. We, like any local expression of God’s vast and expansive family we call Church have a simple task—to follow Jesus. We so often want this to be flashy, explosive, earth shattering, world changing. We’re gonna be the Church and we’re gonna let everyone know that we’re the Church. But that’s not how this works.

I can think of my own Christian Manifesto I wrote as a teenager who finally discovered what it meant to take Jesus seriously. There was a lot of zeal then. Decades later, the zeal looks a lot different now. I find myself drawn to Eugene Peterson’s idea of the Christian life—a long obedience in the same direction. A garden being cultivated.

The slow, faithful, and costly task before us of putting Jesus at the center of our lives today, and the day after that. A rootedness. And like a garden slowly, and imperceptibly, suddenly buds form, and

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 5)



V E S P E R S
EVENINGS WITH GOD

WEDNESDAYS IN JUNE AND JULY

MUSIC. JOURNALING. PRAYER.

7:30 - 8:15 p.m.



Easter brunch was a deeply communal and celebratory time together!

flowers bloom. Not by their effort, but because God brought them forth. For those who have been paying attention, we've seen this among us this year.

We have collectively done a lot of good this past year. Supporting teachers, kids and families at Longfellow Elementary with presence and financial resources. Helping strangers with hotels and connections to support for housing so they don't have to spend the night on the street. You gave a family a car. Repaired it for them—got it out of impound after someone illegally towed it (long story)—and gifted it to them. You have provided food to those who had no food. Paid rent for those about to be evicted: supported Samantha Wells a missionary working with refugee girls, vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking in Greece, and paid utility bills for those whose A/C's and Heaters were shut off. And that is just what we have done on the books as a collective institution. None of this touches on the things off the books, the things done with and for one another and our neighbors. The meal trains, the long conversations, the prayers, the check-ins, the friendship.

But all of this, as good and important and beautiful as it is, all of it, pales in comparison to why we exist and the gift we offer the world. We do not exist to fix the world, to be the solution to all of life's ills. We exist as witnesses to the One Who Is. And beyond all the good that we have done this year God has shown

people among us that God loves them, and wants to be with them. People like David, Lynn, Chris, Scott, and Key. Stories you can read further into this report. People like a young woman in Tennessee who was a self described agnostic turned pagan. Unable to shake the conversations she had with Redemption's pastors on behalf of a friend, she found herself being drawn into Christ's love.

Redemption we are God's work. And we like a garden cultivated by a Master Gardener are to go about the patient rooted work of being present to the ground we are planted in. Being the Church where we are. For today, Jesus has sent us here. Right where we are. To show these people in front of us and beside us a love and a life that they were made for.

As 2026 opened we found ourselves in an onslaught of disruption, of oppression, evil, all we thought secure and safe suddenly called into question. Many of us were and are still shaken to our core, at a loss for what to do and how to be in this present reality. My best answer for us is that we do what the Church has always done, we be the Church wherever we happen to find ourselves. We commit to Jesus centered lives in our homes, our workplaces, our schools, our commutes. Showing up wherever we happen to be as people who have been sent to that place and that time to love those before us. We faithfully, and stubbornly, and sometimes at great cost make the choice to take Jesus seriously enough to actually listen and respond to Him.

To each day.
Each moment.
Each person.

We do not get to choose the time in which we live our lives. And Jesus has called us here in this present moment to love God and neighbor. The slow, arduous task of faithfulness, rootedness; a community who, over time, flowers will burst forth from.

Consider the lilies Redemption. And give attention to the ground in which you have been planted.

Brandon Alred
Pastor

**"AND WE LIKE A GARDEN
CULTIVATED BY A
MASTER GARDENER
ARE TO GO ABOUT THE
PATIENT ROOTED WORK
OF BEING PRESENT
TO THE GROUND WE
ARE PLANTED IN."**

REDEMPTION STORIES

SELECTED STORIES FROM PARTICIPANTS IN OUR BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY.

SCOTT AND KEY



Living in the neighborhood Scott and Key would often walk by Redemption and became curious on what this non-denominational church was all about. Over the past year, they had a sense that something

was drawing them back towards the Church. One Sunday morning they decided to take the risk and make the “super long” walk down the street and see what God might be trying to show them with this church down the block. After their first visit they both had a sense they were being drawn into something significant, that they were on the right path to finding community and their way back into the Church, something they both had talked about together for a while.

They had been longing for a place of worship that felt inclusive but not invasive. Key knew she wanted to be active and serve and build a community of friends, especially having transitioned from living in another state most of her life. Scott felt a sense that God was drawing him towards something he had lost but wanted to recover—towards a version of himself he longed to be. Now over the past year they believe Redemption has been the key to the recent evolution of their faith. They’ve connected with the people and our commitment to be a Jesus centered people.

They believe God led them to Redemption so that they can be encountered by God personally, not vicariously through others. Now they find their study, utilizing the Journaling and Practice cards always available near the donuts, is guided, intentional, but their own. Since attending Redemption they have both noticed that they have felt more at home in their faith, and seen a growth in their spiritual lives.

CHRIS



I first came to Texas with the Army, and later moved to Houston to be closer to my then spouse’s family. After our separation, I felt isolated and alone. My family was far away, and most of my friends in the area had been connected to my ex, so I was starting over completely.

Around Christmas time, I discovered KSBJ on the radio playing Christmas music and kept listening even after the holidays. It was comforting, but I longed for community—a place where I could belong. I started looking for a church. I didn’t grow up in church, so choosing one for myself was new, and I wanted a place that would accept me as a member of the LGBTQ family. When I found Redemption and saw it described itself as radically inclusive, I felt hopeful but cautious.

When I explored Redemption’s Spotify channel, one of the most recent sermons, “For those who feel on the outside,” immediately caught my attention. Hearing it at that moment felt like it had been written just for me, speaking directly to the isolation I was experiencing. I dared to show up, and have been attending Redemption Church for a little over a year now.

Over the past year, Redemption has been so much more than a church. Through the classes/cohorts, tables, clubs, sermons, and conversations, it has nourished my curiosity, welcomed my questions, and offered space to grow. I’ve experienced God’s presence through the love, encouragement, and acceptance here.

I never imagined Houston would feel like home, or that I’d become a Texans fan—or even be excited to read a 696-page book—but somehow all of that is true. What started as a community has become family, and I am deeply grateful for the ways God has met me here.

LYNN



For as long as I can remember, Church and God have always been an important part of my life, whether it has been in a “bricks and mortar” setting, or without. But I had not attended church in roughly 20 years. Until Redemption.

I grew up in this neighborhood, attended Longfellow Elementary and Bethany Methodist (where I later got married) and played at the Linkwood Community Center and Park.

Since retiring 11 years ago, I walked past Redemption many times and wondered to myself “what kind of church calls itself ‘Redemption?’” Despite wanting to go, it was hard to enter, alone, into a world that I once knew, but had since become distant from me.

When I learned this church was “non-denominational”, I was intrigued. I had never felt I totally fit into a distinct, organized slice of the church typically labeled as a “denomination”. I have been attending Redemption now for about 2.5 years. I love that the pastors are easily accessible and the sermons continually teach us to live out Jesus-centered lives. And because of Redemption, I now pray almost daily (versus occasionally) and strive harder to be a more understanding, caring person in my day-to-day life, though I fail often.

This church has been a gift to me in so many ways, walking with me in good times and difficult times. When my brother Scot passed away last year, Redemption was there to walk beside me and guide me as we planned his funeral service. I like to think Scot is looking down at us from Heaven with a smile on his face.

Because of Redemption, I now have a church I can call home and to which I try to support with my time, talent and treasures.

DAVID

David came to Redemption reluctantly. His friend Albert insisted he come to Church with him. They found one near David that they both agreed might work and did the scary thing of showing up. David half joked that the roof of the church was gonna cave in because he was there. David hadn't been inside of a church in something like four decades. David was convinced people like him didn't belong in church. God didn't want to have anything to do with, could never love someone like him. David didn't just wear a Scarlett letter, he wore sense of divine condemnation around his neck like an anchor. Showing up to church meant risking being reminded that his fears about God might just actually be true.

What he discovered instead was a community which welcomed and made space for him. He volunteered during last year's Easter celebration—quietly collecting trash, cigarette hanging out of his mouth, keeping his distance. He wasn't quite sure what to make of the fact that he seemed to be included and

welcomed at an event like that, counted among a people like this. He was still grappling with the fact that he had a seat at Jesus' table, a place in God's family.

David carried a lot of regret, he carried a lot of shame, but slowly over time he found healing, forgiveness, and grace here among us. In David's final days he expressed how badly he wanted to get out of the hospital so he could join us again for worship. While expressing a peace and joy he suddenly had. He knew he was going to die soon, but he faced death knowing that he had received the grace, forgiveness, and welcome of Christ. David never could fully see it, but he was a gift to us. He will be missed and we won't be the same without him. But I am so thankful that God lead him here to be among us for his final year of life. And I know we will get to worship together again in the resurrection.

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

Average weekly attendance: 79.8
20.9% growth when comparing 2024 May - Dec

Average group size: 12

Total number of Groups: 19
Tables, Classes, Cohorts, Youth, CUB

Right: Our Kids kicked off the season of Chrstitmastide by bringing their ornaments to the tree on Christmas Eve.



A LOOK BACK

Last year people were drawn into deeper communion with God—showing up to church, praying, and reading their Bibles, many for the first time in a very long time and some for the first time ever. There were those among us who encountered a profound sense of God’s calling and presence in their lives and others who formed and deepened meaningful friendships. Still others had faith in God and perhaps even the idea of Church itself, rekindled. And many who were convinced people like them don’t belong in Church discovered God says they belong in God’s family. And more people chose to gather with us — wondering if they’d be welcome, wondering if God might speak to them here, wondering if this Jesus thing was really for them. People not just looking for a church, but drawn by God towards Jesus. People who wondered if they could or would belong in God’s family found themselves welcomed and included.

Right here among us.
 God’s work.
 Seated next to us.
 Singing with us.
 Included with us.

We participated in this work. Gathering to listen, respond, feast, and be sent—encountered and formed by God. Entering into a variety of practices of prayer, listening and responding to God together both on Sunday mornings and in sacred gatherings like Good Friday and Vespers. We asked hard questions about God and the scriptures together—in classes, around tables, through film and books and real conversation. We entered into deeper relationships through the slow, patient practice of sharing a meal and life with one another. Behind it all we worked to strengthen

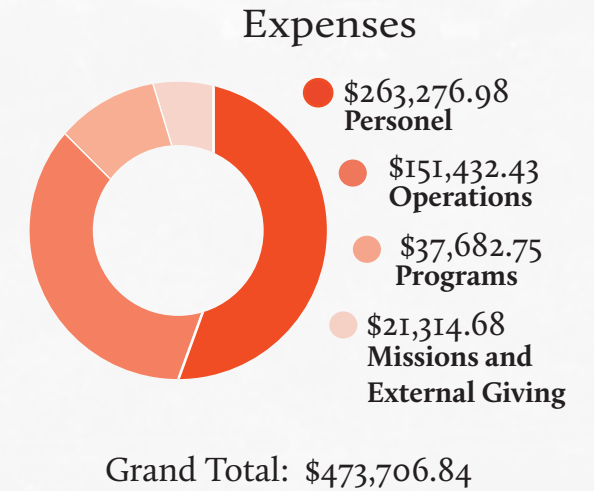
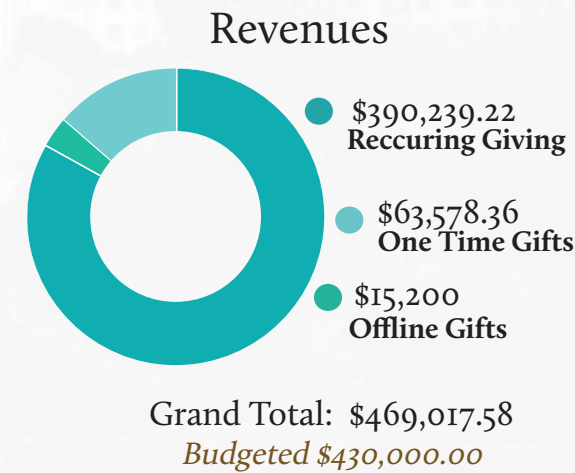
an organizational foundation that lets a community like this grow.

Together we experienced Church. Participants in the encounter and formation of the living God. Witnesses to God’s drawing of others into our community to bring healing to the wounded and belovedness to the ostracized. Discoverers of what it means to be called as a Jesus-centered people—of what it means to be the Church when we’re gathered so that we can be the church as we go about our daily lives.

We experienced the unique gift the Church offers each of us and the broader world — communion with the living God.

FINANCIAL REPORT

2025 Financials



Building Stability on a Year of Growth

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude. Because of your generosity and faithful giving, we are thrilled to share that our church community exceeded our ambitious revenue goal. That is no small thing, and it would not have been possible without each one of you.

These resources allowed us to invest in meaningful ways. We made long-overdue updates and repairs to our space, ensuring it remains a welcoming and well-maintained space for everyone to encounter Jesus. We continued to invest in our staff, who show up day after day with dedication and love for this church. And we remained committed to pouring into the broader community around us, because loving our neighbors is central to who we are.

Our expenses did come in over budget again this year, but as has been the case, every dollar spent was done so with care and intention. These were not surprises, they were strategic choices made to strengthen the foundation of this church for the years ahead.

As we look ahead, we want to be transparent with you: this year’s revenue goal is the most ambitious we have ever set, and it is built on the foundation of what you made possible last year. We are not setting this goal out of wishful thinking, but out of faith in what this community has already shown it can do. Continued, consistent giving is what will allow us to keep investing in our staff, our space, and the community around us.

We enter the new year on solid footing, and that is entirely a reflection of this community’s trust, generosity, and commitment to this work. Thank you for making all of this possible. Together, we will continue to co-create a space where everyone can encounter the radically inclusive hope of Jesus.

Sam Martinez
 Sam Martinez
 Treasurer



We enjoyed the gift of one another at our annual wine night.

LOOKING AT 2026

A YEAR OF BEING ROOTED

Looking ahead to 2026, we want to be a healthy church rooted in Christ's life and Houston's soil.

Redemption is a beautiful and unique expression of God's Church, and many of us have experienced the gift of a church like this existing. We want that to be true in the decades to come —and, Lord willing, long after each of us are gone.

In this year of Being Rooted, we will focus on four areas of attention.

1 Rootedness

The slow, faithful work of being God's people embedded in Christ's life.

First and foremost, we want to always be a community centered on Jesus, giving attention to our rootedness in Christ. Throughout 2026 our sermon series, Being with Jesus, will follow the Revised Common Lectionary and the rhythms of the Church calendar. In doing this we join the wider Church across time and place in attending to the story of Jesus.

We also anticipate gaining clarity this year regarding Redemption's long-term location, allowing us to begin taking meaningful steps toward that future.

Our hope is that the patterns of Christ's life will begin shaping our own—forming our hearts, imaginations, and even our experience of time.

2 Organizational Health

A healthy church, with healthy leaders, for a long time to come.

We also want to be a healthy church with healthy leaders for years to come. While the church belongs to Christ, we have been entrusted with the stewardship of His community.

Like a garden trellis, organizational structure should never be confused for the living organism it supports. Instead it exists to support growth, health, and longevity.

In 2026 we will continue strengthening our financial and organizational foundations. This includes implementing our new giving platform, developing clearer financial health indicators, refining accounting procedures, and continuing the structural work begun last year to better support our ministries and ministry leaders.

3 Creativity

Beautiful and Meaningful Worship.

We will continue cultivating imaginative and consistent liturgies that are both meaningful and theologically robust.

gratuitous and seated at the heart of our life with God.

Through Redemption's Music Residency and our ongoing cultivation of art as theological expression, we want to insist that beauty and enjoyment are like God's grace—entirely

We look forward to continuing to explore new ways this beauty can be experienced and expressed in our worship together.

4 Hospitality

A community where people are known and space is made for others.

Finally, we want to grow as a community of hospitality—where people are known, cared about and welcomed.

We hope to embody the welcome of Jesus by creating meaningful space for guests and newcomers, while also attending to the real lives we each live beyond Sunday mornings—giving

attention to turning new faces into new friends in an expanding community, caring for one another with presence and prayer in good and hard times, while continuing to support the church with ongoing pastoral care. We want to be a church who continues to embody a Jesus-centered life by loving people.

2026 MINISTRY TEAM

PASTORAL:

Brandon Alred Lead Pastor
Christine Yeh Children's Pastor
Jordan Rhea Preacher in Residence
Chantal Avery Pastoral Resident & Ordinand

OPERATIONS:

Jordan Fuller Operations Director
Collin Ross Creative Arts and Communications Coordinator

TEAM LEADS:

Kelley Henry	Hospitality	Harrison Varvel	Technology
Todd Parish	Readers	Nita Reyes	Church Under the Bridge
Douglas Baker	Youth		

COUNCIL:

Todd Parish, Kate Spinnato, Patrick Ding,
Sam Martinez, Keri Schadler, and Brandon Alred

Thank you for being a generous church.

Your generosity helps us move towards financial health as we pursue our mission.

Find out how to contribute at redemptionhou.com/give.

Questions about giving? Email treasurer@redemptionhou.com



**REDEMPTION
CHURCH**

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