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# VISION FORWARD

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## INVESTING OUR LIVES AND RESOURCES

Our 2018 Vision Verse is Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." We said in the beginning of the year that to be God's "workmanship" is to be created out of nothing. With Genesis and the beginning of creation in mind, Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17) Into the darkness and void of a life of sin God spoke, the light of his Son appeared, and by his Spirit he formed and shaped a new life. By grace you have been saved, not by your own works, but by the work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

As Christians we believe, then, that we are a new kind of humanity, born again, not in our own image, but in the image of Jesus Christ. The old has passed away, the new has come in.

In God's timing, we are born and born again for such a time as his. The works which we are called to do, these "good works" prepared for us, are in part both the reason and the purpose for God saving us when and where he did. They aren't prepared at the point of becoming Christians.

They've been prepared beforehand, before creation, before time, before we were conceived in our mother's womb.

"To walk in" these good works means more than what we do. It means a way of living. In other words, as Elim Grace, our *lifestyle* is one of good works. This is who we are created to be in Christ. We were made for this.

The question, then, becomes, personally and corporately, what are the good works God has prepared for us to do, the good works we were made for?

In general, first and foremost, we are called to *surrender* our lives. We are to follow Jesus and become like him, not in our own power, but in the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. We are to be transformed in mind and in heart (Romans 12:1). It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (Galatians 2:20). Our lives in word, thought, and action are to be lived out in obedience, in love, and in worship to God. We are not better than the rest of humanity for living this way, but we are "other," holy, set apart.

Second, we are called to *invest* our lives. By invest I mean to take all our resources—health and energy, time and money, knowledge and strength, work and plans, communication and relationships, skills and gifts—and to steward them for the good of our homes, neighborhoods, and cities. All of life is stewardship and all of stewardship can be a proclamation and confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).

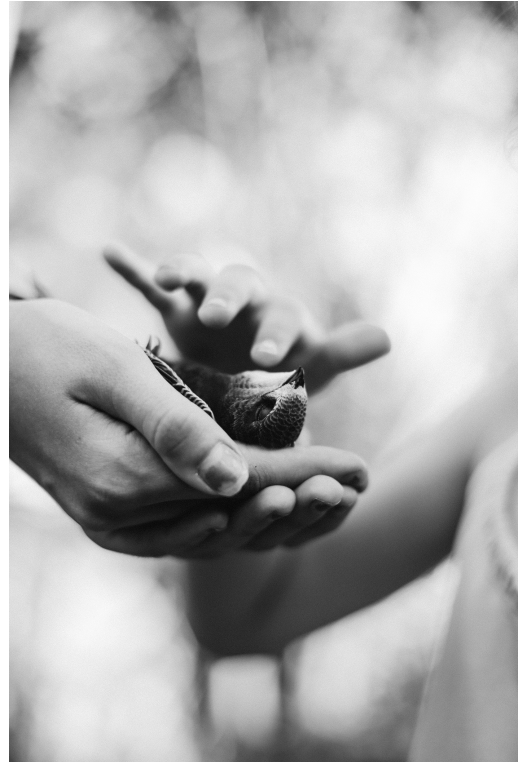
Investing our lives and resources in the good works God has uniquely called us to do will require wisdom, self-control, faith, grit, hope, joy, love, and endurance. Remember, God's question to us recently was, "Do you have a mission or does My mission have you?" As we live out his mission for us, it will take on a unique shape and direction. We will begin to see and to sense that the works God has called us to do are not works he has called others to do. There may be similarities, but there will also be differences.

No two persons and no two church bodies are the same in calling or in gifting. Instead, Jesus has prepared good works for each local church spread across different cultures, times, and places.

So we are not called to do all things. We are not called to reach all people. We are not called to go to all places. Corporately as Elim Grace we are to allocate and invest the resources entrusted to us into the things which God has called *us* to accomplish.

To do this will inevitably mean directing our resources towards certain things and away from others. This will likely mean maximizing by minimizing: investing more in a few things rather than investing a little in many things.

This is a matter of being a wise and faithful steward. It is not a matter of one program, person, or ministry being bad and another being good. It is a matter of which "good works" God as our Master has entrusted to us as his steward.



***Our lifestyle is one of good works. This is who we are.***

We should, in fact, approach our personal lives and resources in a similar way. We don't have an infinite supply of money or time or energy. Therefore, each of us assess what our priorities are, what God has given as our primary tasks and areas of care and responsibility, and we invest primarily there. It would be irresponsible to take valuable and limited resources away from an area of great importance and to invest them in an area of little importance.

Also, hand in hand with allocating our resources responsibly, is having resources *available*. God will give us opportunities we haven't imagined yet. If we are faithful over little, he will make us faithful over much. We must be prepared and ready to take action when these opportunities arrive. But we won't be if we are not wise with our resources now.

As we enter the last quarter of this year, let us finish strong, participating in God's grace by being generous in our giving and serving. Let us live life with an open hand to receive from God and to give to others, as well as with open eyes looking forward to 2019 and what God is calling us to invest in. As we move closer we'll ask the following questions:

*Are we over-resourcing an area that God is not blessing or calling us to? Are we under-resourcing an area that God is blessing and calling us to?*

*Where is there momentum and passion in what we do? Where is there no momentum and passion in what we do? If we were to start over, would we invest in this area again?*

All of these questions and more force us to return to the one question we should always start with: Why? Why are we doing this? If we answer because we've always done it, or because it seems like a good idea, or because people will be disappointed if we don't, then we will never dare to push further.

The question of "Why" is one that ultimately needs one answer: because God called us. Then we can dare to push further. Because though the climb at times will appear too difficult or impossible for us to achieve, we will remember, and have the deep-seated conviction, that we didn't start this. God did. And with him all things are possible.

So let us be trustworthy stewards, good and faithful servants, of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There is nothing that we have that we have not received from him. We owe him everything, because on the cross he lost nothing of what the Father gave him. That includes both Elim Grace, God's workmanship, and the good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

***There must be the  
deep-seated conviction  
that we didn't start this.  
God did.***





## A BRIEF LOOK AT OUR HISTORY

**1968:** Elim Grace Christian Church began after a series of meetings in May 1968 with some interested individuals and Brother Said Adour of Elim Fellowship

**1969:** The former St. Matthews English Lutheran Church on the corner of West Second and Mohawk streets was acquired, and was initially called Elim Pentecostal Tabernacle. The first pastor was Kenneth Van Druff.

**1972:** Rev. Paul Heidt and family arrive in September

**1975:** Rev. Ron Smallman succeeds Rev. Heidt. He is assisted by Rev. Mike Cavanaugh and eventually by his father, the Rev. Robert Smallman.

**1978:** The name is changed to Elim Full Gospel Church.

**1981:** The Rev. Robert Smallman leads the congregation as pastor.

**1982:** Rev. Philip Keevil and family arrive to lead the church.

**1985:** Name is changed to Elim Grace Christian Church

**1987:** The church is guided by Elders William King and John O'Brien

**1990:** Rev. Richard Fox assumes pastorate.

**1996:** Pastor Fox retires and William King is installed as pastor.

**1998:** Elim Grace moves to West Baptist Church, and Rev. King is ordained.

**2001:** Elim Grace moves to OCCS building.

**2003:** Jonathan Evans added to pastoral staff, the former Elim Tabernacle building is sold, and the search for an in-town property is begun. Thirteen properties were examined by the congregation in this process..

**2004:** New Elim Grace property is purchased at 340 West First Street.

**2005:** Former Kingsford Pump/Neal O'Brien building is razed. Rev. Jonathan Evans is ordained. The new land is dedicated in an early Fall service.

**2007:** Elim Grace prepares for construction of a new \$1.3 million future home. One of the initial steps is a Capital campaign to raise funds in which \$642,000 was committed, with an initial offering of \$113,000.00.

**2008:** Elim Grace moves in to a new facility and celebrates 40 years as a church

**2009:** Rapid growth causes us to address changes in structure and we begin to formulate some consistent policies to guide us.

**2010:** We begin to make effort to reduce mortgage debt in view of future expansion.

**2016:** Planning has begun for a 2017 transition in the lead pastor role. Pastor King has announced he is stepping down as lead pastor with the hope of remaining on pastoral staff to assist Pastor Jonathan Evans in September of 2017.

**2017:** Pastor King transitions from the Lead Pastor role and Rev. Jonathan Evans becomes the eighth Lead Pastor of Elim Grace

**2018:** Elim Grace purchases the Midstate Music building at 264 West Second Street with plans for a future ministry center to drug addicts. Elim Grace celebrates 50 years as a church and 10 years in its new facility.