
VISION FORWARD



IT'S TIME TO EXPAND

Our one big church goal for 2024 is:

Complete a capital campaign - *breaking ground in 2025, completing expansion in 2026*

16-17 years ago we successfully ran our first capital campaign. With the help of what we raised we took out a loan to build and call this place home. We moved in 2008. We paid off our loan in half the expected time (Easter of 2022). But this building we do ministry in was always the first of three phases.

It is without question that we have grown over the last 3 years. Yet we began exploring expansion plans in early 2020 and at the time there didn't appear to be any outward signs of needing more space. Even so, we were convinced to continue counting the cost, gathering our resources, and planning ahead. In retrospect, I believe it was the Lord who was stirring us onward and guiding us forward. Today we find ourselves in a position of outgrowing our sanctuary and, especially, our children's classrooms. We have ministries who gather and use our building every day of the week, sometimes multiple ministries, sometimes multiple times a day. This is all very exciting and, although it to took me somewhat by surprise, it hasn't surprised Jesus. This is His church. It's His vine, His growth, His fruit.

After three years of working with our original design-build company out of Rochester, NY (D'Agostino) we are approaching the final phase which will allow us to get hard and fixed costs this Spring. We know we are looking at an expansion that will fall in the range of \$2.5-\$4.0 million dollars. The expansion will be both original phases 2 and 3 combined into one.

As mentioned above, the earliest we can break ground will be early next year, with a tentative completion date of 2026. We spent a significant amount of time last year in prayer and thought over a future capital campaign....The future is now. We have hired INJOY Stewardship Solutions to guide us through a new capital campaign which will launch sometime this Fall. INJOY will be walking alongside us over the next 3 years and I am very excited and confident to be working with them.

You have heard me say more times than I can count (and hopefully more than enough times so you won't forget) that "we are growing a big people, not a big church". Growing in numerical size has never been a priority to me. Still...if Jesus is giving us growth in numbers then I humbly submit to Him. The task is to steward this well. (Moving to three services is an attempt to steward this growth.) But the greater task is to grow the *people* Jesus sends us. To make disciples. This is the call and command He's given us. To grow a BIG people in Christ is our vision — a people BIG in Christ, big in His mercy, grace, joy, power, love, wisdom, humility, generosity — in every aspect of who He is and what He does.

I believe that to grow in numbers only is to grow shallow roots. The vine will wither and die. A new building will soon be nothing but an empty shell. But to grow a BIG people in Christ is to put down deep roots in the Spirit and is then to expect by God's power fruit that remains, even much fruit that remains. The fruit God gives is in transformed lives. These will in turn produce more good works, more new ministries, more generosity, more gospel "salt and light" in our city and county.

I have a vision for a large place or hub of ministry, both a gathering and a sending place. Where Jesus dwells, His Spirit empowers, and God's people both serve and equip others. A place of praise and worship, freedom and healing, joy and comfort, safety and peace, hope and love — a place where the good news and glory of Jesus radiates in and through His people. Where His light dispels the dark and brings life to lives lost.

Once we were not a people, Elim Grace, but now we are God's people. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy in Christ Jesus. Our building is in the center of our city both by our decision and God's sovereignty. We exist to proclaim to Oswego, New York the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light: *Jesus Christ*. So, Elim Grace, let's grow a BIG people in Christ and, if necessary, let's build and expand together again.

RHYTHMS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Towards growing a BIG people in Christ, here are five discipleship rhythms I pray we all will hear, feel and follow in 2024:

1. **The Rhythm of Attending Weekly** - *we are called to worship God not in isolation but in community*

A Christian in America considers "regular" church attendance to be 3 out of 8 weeks. I believe it should be more like 7 out of 8 weeks. "Church" is more than a weekend meeting you make. It's an encounter you can't miss. Why? How? Because the church is a living organism. The living body of Christ. The life of Christ flows to you BECAUSE you're a part of His body in fellowship, NOT because you attend an event. Let's make it a priority to come worship together.

2. **The Rhythm of Connecting** - *we are saved not apart from the body of Christ but into it*

As we grow bigger we must also grow smaller. There is no discipleship without fellowship. You must be in fellowship, in a small group or Bible study, if you are to be built up and build up others in the faith. There's no way around it: we need the other members of the body to grow. So let's connect. Let's not be casual or isolated in our fellowship.

3. **The Rhythm of Growing** - *we are empowered to walk in newness of life not by our own strength but by the Spirit*

If you do nothing, things fall apart, whether your physical health, your relationships, or your vehicle. This is as much a rule in your spiritual life. Seek to be in the Word, in prayer, reading a book, listening to a podcast, etc. The growing vine needs a solid trellis, a structure to grow on. Pursue growth in God and have a structure in your life to carry the growth. The Spirit wants you to grow and, therefore, will lead you to grow in Christlikeness. Let's keep pace with Him.

4. **The Rhythm of Serving** - *we are equipped not to be served but to serve one another*

We are "born again" in the likeness of Christ. To serve one another. To love one another. To put one another first. The early church gave and served generously because they first received with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:42-47). Since we have received freely, let us also give freely. Let's find a place to serve.

5. **The Rhythm of Inviting** - *we are created not to get eternal joy but to share in it*

Pray daily for 5 people - a family member, a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, for a providential encounter. Invest weekly if possible in their life. (Say hi, send a text, ask how they are.) Invite them when appropriate (to church, to your home for dinner, out for a cup of coffee.) We are a friendly church, but we must not lose the art/gift of hospitality. Of going one step beyond friendliness. Let's invite others on the journey. We want them to "fully share our joy" (John 1:4).