

ADVANCE

2020 Update



community
CHURCH

ALMA - MOUNT PLEASANT



Alan Cullen
Lead Pastor

an update from **your pastor**

Jesus Christ is the head of the church and we are His body, called according to His purposes. What an exciting life that is! In fact, I can't imagine it any other way. We get to accomplish His purposes together. We look to His leadership, follow as best we can with humble hearts that are driven with a love for God, and a love for people.

Exactly one year ago we launched an initiative called ADVANCE. It represents a two-year window of time where Community Church is responding to the Lord in multiple, key Gospel projects. Why do this? Because we have experienced the Good News and it has transformed us. Keeping that to ourselves is simply not an option. And the response from you (the church) has been beyond expectations. I am so proud of our church family, who carries a heart for the lost and is willing to act on that.

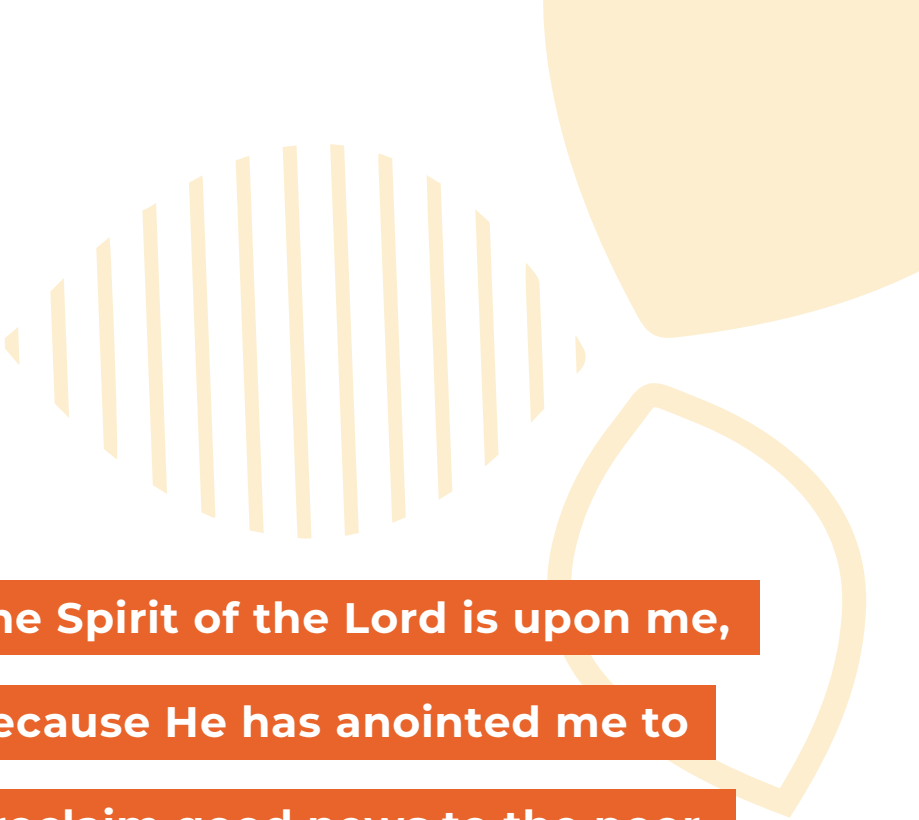
At this half way point we want to take the opportunity to recast the vision, especially for those who are new to the church in recent months. You'll learn more about this in the pages that follow.

Would you fully engage with God over these next few weeks together, so we can ADVANCE the Gospel in Mount Pleasant, Alma and around the world?



A person is shown from behind, with their right hand raised towards a bright, circular light source at the top of the frame. The scene is dark, with the light creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the person's hand and hair. In the background, there are blurred shapes and colors, including a bright orange light on the right side. The overall mood is one of hope, aspiration, or reaching for a goal.

Together
on Purpose



**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because He has anointed me to
proclaim good news to the poor.**

**He has sent me to proclaim liberty
to the captives and recovering of
sight to the blind, to set at liberty
those who are oppressed.**

Luke 4:18



continuing to advance the gospel

Together on purpose. That vision may never have been more important than it has been throughout 2020. No doubt, this past year has been one that has left an impact on all of us. However, through all the strife, uncertainty, and anxiety, the message of Jesus Christ has had opportunities to shine brighter, bolder and stronger.

For Community Church, our commitment to advance the Gospel never took a break or a pause. Through your generosity and commitment to the God-sized vision of ADVANCE, together we launched a campus, funded ministry, provided support and most importantly, embraced opportunities to share the message of the hope we have in Jesus in familiar, as well as creative ways.

As we step into the next half of ADVANCE, it might be tempting to rest - to simply look at everything we've done and pause our personal commitment. Simply put, we can't. Our world, our communities need the message of Christ now more than ever. As we celebrate our 40th anniversary as a church, we're 'over the hill,' but we're gaining momentum.

Don't let up, don't slow down.

We want to be the Church. We are not spiritual spectators; we are spiritual contributors. We are convinced that every follower of Christ is called to serve the Savior who was crucified. God is calling us to live lives together on purpose. To be a part of Community Church means to love people unconditionally, impact this community, make disciples, influence families and be empowered by His Spirit.

Let's continue to press on to keep taking ground for the Kingdom and ADVANCE!



ADVANCE

1 advancing the gospel in alma

2



3



Alma, Michigan

Continuing to Advance the ministry of the Alma Campus

- ☒ Launch the Alma campus on January 5, 2020, including outfitting the new campus and purchasing equipment.
- ☒ Continue to fund all programming, staffing and Pastoral needs for Sunday morning worship, including children's ministry, at the Alma Campus for the next year.
- ☐ Set the groundwork for a permanent location in Alma.
- ☐ Lead more people in Gratiot County into a focused life with Jesus Christ.

Funds needed: \$2.929 Million

ADVANCE

1



2 advancing the gospel
in mount pleasant

3



Mount Pleasant, Michigan

Advance the expansion of ministry in Mount Pleasant

- ☒ Fund the continuation and growth of ministry to children, students, young adults, widows and groups, as well as our Sunday worship and preaching.
- ☐ Launch a Christ-centered 12 step ministry program for addiction recovery in our community.
- ☐ Update and refurbish sections of the facility for future ministry.
- ☒ Reach an increasing number of families in Isabella County and the surrounding area.

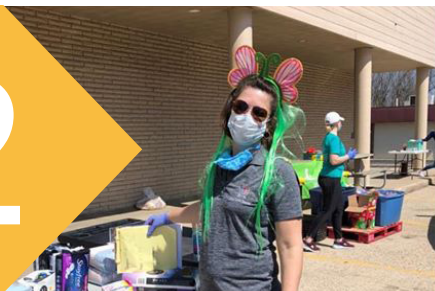
Funds needed: \$3.347 Million

ADVANCE

1



2



3 advancing the gospel through
4:18 Initiative

4:18 Initiative

Advance the 4:18 Initiative



Identify and expand local church partnerships in Central Michigan in both Isabella and Gratiot County (with more to come in 2021)



Expand benevolence and tangible care into the context of urgent and crisis situations for people in our communities.



Increase support for global partnerships.



Establish funding for Community Groups to reach out through external, tangible expressions of the Gospel in their communities.



Lift the burden and stress of unpayable medical debt for individuals and families in and around Central Michigan.

Funds needed: \$724,000



your next steps

Pray

The Macedonian church was known to have faith beyond themselves. They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then, by the will of God, also to us, the Church. A faith that advances the Gospel doesn't come from our personality or even our emotions, but by seeking God through prayer. A faith that advances the Gospel comes by being with Jesus. ***Ask God what He wants you to give to the ADVANCE Initiative.*** Surrender all you are and all you have to Him. Be BOLD as you pray!

Reflect

As you pray, we believe the Holy Spirit will speak to you. Take some time to reflect on what you think God is saying to you. If you are married, talk with your spouse about where you sense the Holy Spirit leading. Continue to pray and reflect, humbling yourselves before God and each other.

Take a Step

Discipleship and generosity go hand in hand. As we go deeper into our relationship with God, we learn what it means to value Him above all else. Growing as a follower of Jesus is a journey of ongoing steps of trust in Jesus. We don't grow without taking a step of faith. ***Growing in generosity requires us to take a step of trusting Jesus as we give what He has called us to give.*** We do this because we value Him, and because we want to point more people to Him.

the giving ladder

The giving ladder is a tool designed to help a person move from money being their god to money being a tool for advancing God's Kingdom. It helps by focusing on the behaviors and attitudes of our hearts rather than on amounts or percentages, further transforming us into the likeness of Christ. Each step represents growth in a lifestyle of generosity and sacrifice. These are not steps you slowly ascend to get to God, but simply a way to evaluate your growth in generosity. Scripture encourages us to grow in every facet of our walk with Christ, including the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).

There are 5 steps in a person's 'Giving Ladder'. Where are you in this journey?

Initial Giver 2 Corinthians 8:7-15

An Initial Giver is someone who decides to give for the first time out of a response to God's Word about giving. This is an initial step of obedience, trust in God, and trust the leaders of the Church with this gift.

Occasional Giver 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

This is a person who is becoming increasingly generous in their heart. When the opportunity to give occurs, there is a willingness and openness to give to the Lord. This person may give online, by text message, or in person on a Sunday morning. They may even be moving toward the discipline of giving regularly.

Intentional Giver Luke 14:28-35

An Intentional Giver is someone who begins to think about their giving in relation to other things on which they spend their money. For example, this type of giver begins asking the question, "Why am I giving more to AT&T than I am giving to God? Should I be giving to God more than I give for my car payment each month?" This giver starts to make their giving an intentional

choice that reflects how they prioritize and spend their money. This may be the point when someone begins to tithe, reflecting intentionally about a certain amount or percentage they want to consistently give to God.

Surrendered Giver Colossians 1:15-18, 22-23

A Surrendered Giver is someone who recognizes the cost Christ paid on the cross for them and, as a result, is surrendered to honoring God with 100% of their resources. A Surrendered Giver gives in a way that changes them. Their giving governs their spending and saving rather than their spending and saving governing their giving. A Surrendered Giver isn't concerned with what they ARE giving but more concerned with what they're NOT giving and why. They seek to honor God with 100% of what He has given them, whether by direct monetary giving or with a God-honoring use of an existing resource like a home or a vehicle.

Lifetime Giver 1 Timothy 6:6-19

A Lifetime Giver is someone who thinks about the long-term effects of generosity rather than month-to-month generosity or even year-to-year. A Lifetime Giver makes decisions in the short term which have longer term effects as they relate to their generosity capacity. They think of what home they buy, what car they purchase, how much savings they choose to keep, all in relation to their generosity capacity. A Lifetime Giver might be someone who has a lifetime giving goal which governs their larger-ticket decisions. Much like a Surrendered Giver makes a commitment that will govern his/her monthly and annual decisions, a Lifetime Giver makes a lifetime or longer-term giving commitment that governs his/her larger-item purchases like homes, cars, investments, etc.

committing to a generous life

It's possible that you've been a part of church campaigns in the past where you were asked to give a second gift "above and beyond" your regular giving. We've found that "over and above" giving is potentially confusing to people who don't have a baseline for their "normal giving." If you have any questions about this, please let us know.

For the next year, we are focusing all tithes and offerings we receive into one fund. This single fund will continue to resource the Alma Campus and the ongoing expansion of ministry at the Mount Pleasant Campus, as well as the 4:18 Initiative. This means every single dollar that is given will go to advance the mission of the Gospel in each of the three areas. We've included a sample commitment card below so you can see how a "one fund initiative" works.

☐ I'd like to make my first time ADVANCE commitment of \$

☐ I'd like to expand on my planned commitment by \$

☐ Keep my current ADVANCE commitment of \$

My one year
ADVANCE Commitment

 = \$

☐ Contact me about my ADVANCE giving as an automatic, reoccurring gift each month

☐ I need to make changes to my existing ADVANCE commitment



week 1 | november 8

message notes

A NEW AWARENESS

Scripture: Colossians 5: 1 – 5

Be sure to watch the community group video that accompanies this message at mpcc.org/advancegroups.

community group questions

1. Take a moment and try your best to recall the elements of ADVANCE – the specifics of how this church will make an impact.

(www.mpcc.org/advance if you need a prompt.)

2. “I’ve never wanted something that I didn’t know existed” was a lighthearted prod to every person listening to the sermon. Would you be brave enough to share some ‘thing’ you are chasing after right now, that you really don’t need?

3. What is your story of generosity? Is this an area you want to grow in? Is this something you have struggled with? Has God spoken to you or helped you in the past?

4. Re-read Colossians 3: 1 – 5. What does it mean to “set our hearts” and to “set our minds” on things above? In verse 5, we are called to put certain things “to death”! How does a Christian do that?

5. At the half way point of ADVANCE (2 years), please pray for this initiative in the church and pray for each other as we encounter Christ in the context of generosity.

week 2 | november 15

message notes

Cross Purposes

Scripture: Luke 9:18-23

Be sure to watch the community group video that accompanies this message at mpcc.org/advancegroups.

community group questions

1. James says to his readers that they can tell him they have faith, but he will show them his faith. What does this mean to you?
2. How do the everyday activities in your life prove your faith?
3. Outline what you believe to be the nature of your cross in Jesus' statement, "Take up your cross and follow me."
4. It is often said that Jesus' sermon including prayer, fasting and giving laid out three basic principles of cross bearing. Talk in your group about the challenge of being "All In" in each of these disciplines. How are you doing?
5. We do not give to God in order to receive from Him. However, it seems we can never out give Him! Share your testimony with your group regarding God's blessings to you over our first year of Advance. Now rejoice in HIM.

week 3 | november 22

message notes

The Generosity Of Christ

Scripture: 2nd Corinthians 8: 1 - 9

Be sure to watch the community group video that accompanies this message at mpcc.org/advancegroups.

community group questions

1. This sermon took some time to affirm the centrality of Jesus in who we are and in all we do. Would you agree with that? What ‘extras’ has the church been guilty of adding into salvation besides ‘Christ Alone’?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 5. Paul uses Macedonia as an example of generosity. Can you recall the circumstances and personality of their generosity? How does their example influence you? What does it mean to “abound in grace”?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 8: 8, 9 where Paul gives the ultimate example of generosity in the person of Jesus Christ. Discuss in detail what Christ set aside in order to give up his life for us. What is this “richness” that we have gained through Christ’s “poverty”?

4. We want every single person to encounter Christ when it comes to generosity. Money can hold such a tight grip on us? Why do you think the scripture points us toward personal generosity? What happens to us, when we refuse to hear and obey God in this arena?

5. In this final week of ADVANCE, how have you encountered Christ and what is He is speaking to you?

frequently asked questions

WHEN DID ADVANCE FIRST START?

ADVANCE began Sunday, December 8, 2019, when all giving went into funding the elements of the ADVANCE Initiative. The church committed to give toward this vision for a 2-year period into 2021.

DO I NEED TO TURN IN A NEW COMMITMENT CARD?

Yes, we're asking everyone to fill out a commitment card even if they filled one out last year. You'll see the appropriate boxes to fill out on your card to indicate your previous commitment as well as any necessary changes.

WERE OTHER OPTIONS AND ELEMENTS CONSIDERED?

Yes. Our pastors, elders/trustees, and leaders have been praying and meeting about these opportunities for over a year. We are convinced that this is what God is leading us to do in the season.

WILL ANY DEBT BE INCURRED AS A RESULT OF THIS EFFORT?

No. There is no plan to add any debt. In fact, the Alma element includes a reserve budget to avoid having to incur any debt at this time.

WHAT IF WE DON'T REACH THE AMOUNT NEEDED IN COMMITMENTS OR IF FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS AREN'T KEPT?

We are intentionally prioritizing the elements in such a way to fully fund our ministry budgets, launch the Alma campus, fund expanded ministry, and build a reserve fund for Alma permanency, *only* at the level of giving committed. We believe the church will keep their commitment in full and that the Lord will provide through His people who currently attend and those who will begin to attend.

WHY \$7 MILLION? WHY NOT MORE OR LESS?

We truly feel that this is a “God-sized” goal. It is bigger than what we would be able to accomplish under our own power. We also believe that this is not so far out of reach. We believe this goal is a healthy balance of faith and sound planning.

DOES RAISING \$7 MILLION GET US ALL THE WAY TO A BUILDING IN ALMA?

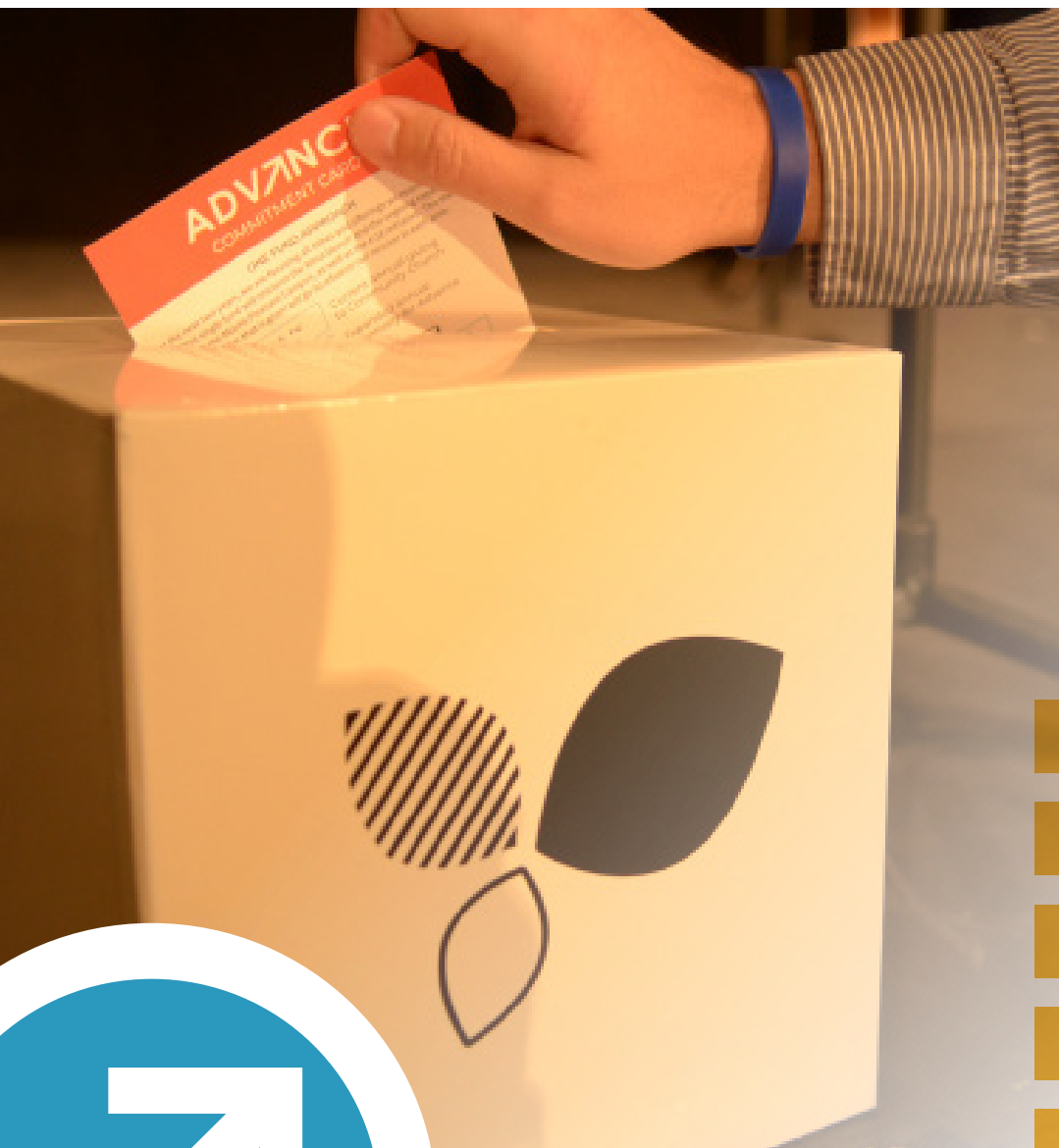
No. With the goal of \$7 million, we hope to have a reserve of around \$1.5 million that will be earmarked toward a permanent location for our Alma campus. At this point, we do not have a firm plan for what permanency looks like in Alma but are working on it diligently. The costs of building projects vary widely and we will be praying for a clearer picture as we move forward with the launch of the Alma campus.

WHAT IF I NEED TO ADJUST A PREVIOUS COMMITMENT?

If you need to make an adjustment from your previous commitment, simply fill out a new commitment card and turn it in after marking the appropriate box to indicate the change and include the updated information on your card.

WHAT IF I STILL HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS?

We’d love to talk with you about any questions you may have. Please reach out to our Executive Pastor Eric Barz at (eric.barz@mpcc.org), or one of the other pastors or elders. We will continue to update the congregation along the way, that will likely address these questions and more.



commitment weekend

On Sunday, November 22, at the service you attend in-person or online, we'll ask you to cheerfully commit to the amount God has laid on your heart. We look forward with great anticipation to what God will do in us and through us as we seek to make an even greater impact on our communities, our nation, and our world.

**Each one must give as he
has decided in his heart,
not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.**

2 Corinthians 9:7

Together on Purpose

PLEASE RETURN THIS BOOKLET TO

EMAIL/PHONE