

**“Dream On”**  
**Proverbs 29:18**

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Do you remember where you were on July 20, 1969? Where were you when Neil Armstrong placed his foot on the moon and uttered those immortal words, ““This is one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind?”

I was sitting in my parents’ living room with family and friends watching this historic event. I recall being proud of our astronauts and all those that made this dream come true. I also remember wishing the dream maker, John Kennedy, had lived to witness this great accomplishment.

I was eleven years old when President Kennedy cast that vision. On May 25, 1961, he addressed a joint session of Congress and said, “I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth.” I was overwhelmed. What an ambitious goal! Could it really happen? One thing was for sure. It could not happen unless we dreamed it and tried. I am so glad we did!

Today, I want to share a dream with you that I have for Smoke Rise Baptist Church.

**Before I do, let me tell you where this dream came from and why it has surfaced.**

Consultants tell us that a church must have a dream in order to grow and flourish. “Where there is no vision, the people perish,” Solomon wrote in Proverbs 29:18. Perhaps he was the first church consultant.

I know he was right on target. People that have no dreams flounder. They achieve little because they are not challenged. They are easily distracted and waste precious resources and energy on frivolous things.

That has certainly not happened at Smoke Rise. For thirty-four years, the members of this church have been busy fulfilling a dream of the founding members. **What was that dream?** It was to build a church. The original dream of a handful of believers meeting in the Smoke Rise Elementary cafeteria was to build a church in which people could worship and from which they could serve the Lord.

**Did they succeed?** Look around. It is evident that they did. Today, we are enjoying the fruits of their labor and sacrifices. How grateful we are. How proud they must be.

Let me tell you something else that church consultants proclaim. A church can ride a dream for about thirty-five years. After that time, a new dream must surface or the church loses momentum and declines. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Let me edit this. “Where there is no **new** vision, the people perish” (RBV-Revised Browning Version).

So, it is time for us to dream a new dream at Smoke Rise. The staff has accepted this challenge and been prayerful about seeking God’s vision for us. We have met and discussed our ideas several times over the course of the year. We have brainstormed and debated. We have talked to consultants and God. We have a **new dream** we would like to propose and it is this. Our new dream at Smoke Rise is to **“Give ourselves away.”**

We want to challenge **every member** of Smoke Rise to take an inventory of the time, talents, resources and influence he or she has and to use them to minister in Jesus’ name. We want to give ourselves away.

**Why?** This is what Jesus expects us to do. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for me and for the Gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of

Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" Mark 8:34-38.

Jesus was a homeless, penniless Galilean carpenter that took a handful of women and men and changed the world. Why? Because they gave themselves away. They offered God everything they had to be used by Him to meet the needs of others. We can do no less. Our world needs us as much as their world needed them. It is in giving ourselves away that we change our world and us for the better. It is in giving ourselves away that we find abundant life, meaning, purpose, peace, security, happiness, joy, fulfillment, courage, strength, confidence, dignity, worth and even forgiveness. All the things that matter most accompany generous and selfless actions.

**How are we going to do this?** In order to give ourselves away, there are three things we must do, grow spiritually, give generously and go boldly into the world.

First of all, we must **grow spiritually**. We must fall in love with God and develop a close relationship with Him. Paul's words need to become our own. "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" Philippians 3: 10-11.

It is not enough to know about our Lord or even have an understanding of certain facts, theories or principles. We must become one with him helping him carry his cross in a world that desperately needs his compassion, love and power.

Secondly, we must **give generously**. Only faithful stewards give themselves away. We must take an inventory of our time, talents, resources and opportunities and offer all that we have to God to be used to advance His Kingdom.

Isn't this what Mary did when she poured perfume upon the feet of Jesus and then wiped his feet with her hair? Love would not allow her to calculate how little she could give to placate her conscience but inspired her to share with him her most valuable treasure, all of it, to express her undying devotion and loyalty.

Speaking of resources and generosity, I would like to lay out a financial challenge before you today. Before this decade is out, I would like for us to have \$1,000,000 in a trust fund so that the interest can be used to help support local and global mission projects along with other ministries in our church.

Ministry is expensive. This is because food, lumber, nails, concrete, clothes, shoes, school supplies, Bibles, Sunday School literature, water filters, medications and medical care are expensive. I think Jesus knew the cost of ministry when he challenged his disciples to "take up their cross and follow him." That cross represented the ultimate sacrifice! Only a faithful steward would accept the challenge. Are we up to that challenge? I believe we are!

Think of ways that you can help us reach this goal. In your annual giving and your estate planning, keep our Mission Trust Fund in mind. Give yourself away in life and death.

Thirdly, we must **go boldly into the world**. Some churches have a sign over the doorway leaving the sanctuary that states, "You are now entering the mission field." I like that, for you see, our mission field is literally steps away. Some mission fields have broader boundaries than others, but all of us must start from the same place, where we are.

Wasn't this Isaiah's sentiment after hearing the voice of God ask, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" I think so, for listen to Isaiah's reply while standing in the temple, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8.

Because I believe we shall do no less than Isaiah, I have asked our Missions Committee to organize us into action. I want them to lay before us local and global needs and ways we can meet them. I don't want them to be timid and bashful. I want them to be bold and challenge us to boldly give and go.

I have long felt convicted that Christians in our culture are blessing themselves to death. We are doing everything possible to make ourselves happy and enjoy life. Look around. It doesn't seem to be working. Believers in our world are just as depressed, frustrated, worried, hateful, rude, competitive, judgmental, critical, jealous and self-centered as unbelievers. In many

settings, it is hard to tell the difference between Christians and non-Christians. This should not be. There is nothing Christ-like about these attitudes and actions.

If we are going to be like Christ we have got to think and live like him. We must “deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him.” We must be more disciplined and unselfish than we have been. We must be more world-centered and less self-centered. We must give ourselves away.

In the words of William Barclay, “God gave us life to spend and not keep. If we hoard life, always thinking of our own profit, ease, comfort, security; if our sole aim is to make life as long and as trouble-free as possible; if we make no effort except for ourselves, we are losing life all the time. But if we spend life for others, if we forget health and time and wealth and comfort in our desire to do something for Jesus and for the people for whom Jesus died, we are winning life all the time.” Lord, help us believe this.

Yes, it is time for a new dream at Smoke Rise. I believe God has given it to us. It is time to give ourselves away. Will you embrace this dream? Will you make a commitment to grow spiritually, give generously and go boldly? For your sake and the world’s, I hope so.