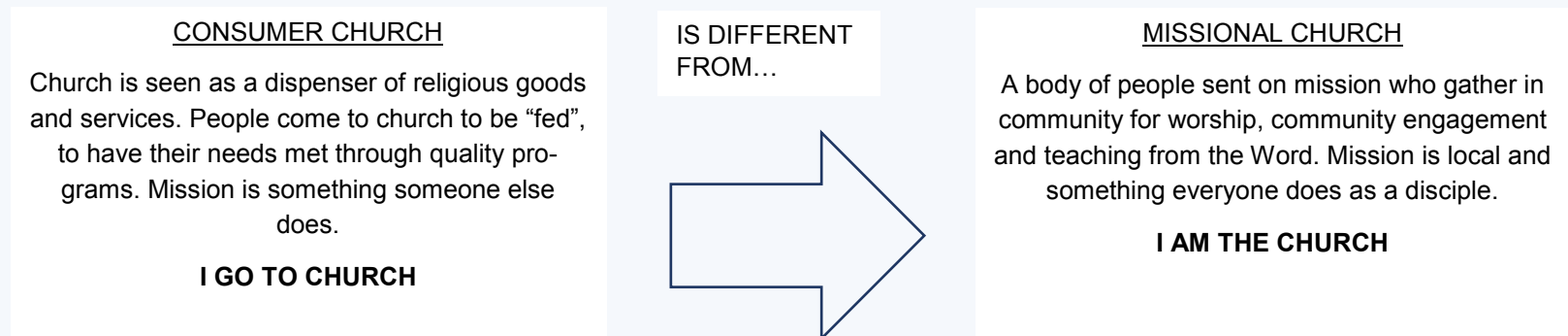


## *Consumerist or Missionary?*

In my sermon this past Sunday, I shared a false expectation that a single effort to climb some proverbial hill will make all the difference. In other words, once gotten through that difficult journey and reach at the “top”, all will be well. The problem is that you cannot stay on that figurative mountaintop. Life will pull us, involuntarily perhaps, back down into the “valley”—whatever that is for you and me—and that can be more difficult than the journey up.

Our response to that descent into the dark valleys of life and then climb the next hill we face is **faith** in our loving God revealed in Jesus Christ. If our faith is in ourselves—our own abilities, economic status, politics, or partisanship—then we will be severely disappointed and left in despair. We cannot rely in the known and familiar because the answer lies in the grace of God that is not of this world. That served as a lead-in for the second false expectation—that life will always stay the same, and we can employ a “fight or flight” response to things that make us uncomfortable.

It was my comment about a reliance upon the known and familiar, a version of the second false expectation, that is addressed by a diagram I have reproduced for you to ponder.



There is a good reason why most congregations are consumer churches. When the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity early in the fourth century A.D. (around 314 A.D. as memory recalls), Christianity became a legal religion in the Roman Empire, and Christians no longer faced persecution. You would think that the period prior to Constantine’s conversion would have been a period in our history where ancient Christians would have fallen into despair and asked “What will the faith do for me now?” Overall, though, that is not what happened. The irony is that during the first three hundred years or so of Christian history, each person lived as if that day would be their last, so they reached out to each other in Christ’s love through physical, financial, and spiritual support rather than cling to individualism or group-think so prevalent today. Christianity thrived in the face of outright persecution because it offered the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ rather than the false hope that cultural idols and political leaders gave.

All that changed after the conversion of Constantine and Christianity became the state religion. With the attainment of power, Christianity became more of a consumer church and less of a missional church. Periods of revival—brief moments when we got back to being a missional church—came and went, and even earnest reform movements like Protestantism of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries eventually fell into a consumer mode. So, it is little wonder why it is so hard to escape a consumerist way of viewing our religious life. It is a socio-cultural trap set long before you and I ever existed and into which we have stepped.

Our personal faith in Christ, which is then shared collectively as a congregation, is the only way of escaping that trap. That conviction, grounded in the harsh reality of our current world rather than a naivete of our cultural sin, is why I dream that the integrity and generous spirit of those first believers of Jesus will be present in the body of Christ today. I imagine us possessing the unifying grace of God given by our Lord and Savior which we cannot help but want to share with others, even at great risk of socio-cultural persecution in our current age. While still remaining active citizens, I envision a faith in our risen Lord and Savior that has nothing to do with political ideology (who is on the left, right, or center of an issue) and partisanship (which candidate we support for office).

I want to slowly but steadily walk with you over the next three years as we change our perspective of what “church” means—from being a **consumer church** that meets our individual needs to a **missional church** filled with people who seek to serve others in whatever way possible. I am asking that you and I together dream like Jesus and envision what God is calling us to be and do as a congregation located at Gate 1 of Lake Lotawana.

Grace and peace,

*Pastor Tom*



### COME JOIN A JOINT ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS!

I will be facilitating a joint adult class starting **October 18** (three Sundays from now) during the pandemic. I could start sooner, but I wanted to give plenty of notice. I use the verb “facilitate” intentionally. I will ask a question, verbally put an idea on the table, or share a diagram on the whiteboard and have a discussion instead of “teach”, which suggests I will do most or all of the talking. Besides, we will need to end the class no later than 9:45 so that I can be ready for the 10:00 service, but that’s not to say that the discussion can’t continue. It certainly can! We will meet in the back classroom for now and move into the sanctuary if we get more than 12 in class in order to remain physically distanced from each other. **Face coverings will still be required.** We’ll start this journey with the Letter of James—a short epistle in the New Testament that does not get much attention but has a lot to say. Since there are only six chapters, feel free to read ahead! If you’ve not been a part of the adult classes in the past, here’s an opportunity to start with something brand new. Hope to see you there!

--Pastor Tom



## ***Bottled Water for Mason Elementary***

Missions will be collecting cases of bottled water or monetary donations for the purchase of bottled water for Mason Elementary for the remainder of this month and November.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions this school year, students K thru 3rd grade, 290 students, are requested to bring their own water bottles daily. Currently, students are not allowed to refill their bottles nor use the water fountains. Therefore, the need for bottled water.

When donating a monetary gift in the form of a check, please write "water" in the memo line. Please leave cases of water in the Commons area.

Also, due to the pandemic and at the request of Mason principal Beth Ratty, Back Snacks will no longer be obtained from Harvesters and delivered weekly to Mason.

If you have questions, please call Cindy Cromer at 816-682-2435.

Thank you for the support of the Mason Students!



(816) 743-4400

Website: [MealsOnWheelsLS.org](http://MealsOnWheelsLS.org)

Facebook: [facebook.com/MOWofLS](https://facebook.com/MOWofLS)

### **Get meals**

We deliver nutritionally balanced and delicious meals to disabled, elderly and isolated community members. Call (816) 743-4400 (prompt #2).

### **Payments and Donations**

You can support Meals on Wheels through donations, partnerships and services. As a 501(c)(3) serving the underserved, your help makes a difference. Go to our website to make a payment or donate. Call (816) 743-4400 (prompt #4).

### **Volunteer**

We are 100% volunteer operated, with individuals helping prepare food for transport, providing office support or delivering to our clients across Lee's Summit. Call (816) 743-4400 (prompt #5).



***On Going:*** Les Case, Wade Davis, Roger Grable, Richard Fuerst, Winnie Fuerst, Harvey Geary, Michael Hatfield, Linda Koleiny, Shane Miley, Nancy Rowe

***Strength and Healing:*** Ken McDaniel, Mike McMillin, Andrew White

***Missions:*** Kenyan G-Marc Project (Chics for Chicks), Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Harvester's Food Bank, Lazarus Ministries, Tarsney Lake Families, Congregation de Mellier, Heart and Soul Children's Learning Center

***Please contact the office to update or add prayer requests***

# October 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
<b>4 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00</b>	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>11 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00</b>	12	13	14	15	16	17
<b>18 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00</b>	19	20	21	22 PPRC Meeting 7:00	23	24
<b>25 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00</b>	26	27	28	29	30	31

