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Celebration Magazine

A publication celebrating what Jesus is doing at Clear Creek



"As she opened the door, she stopped and said out loud, 'I think I'm gonna give this Jesus thing a try.'"

from Counting the Steps



What are you for?

Every person will be known primarily by what they are for or by what they are against.

Against people are critics and complainers who focus on what not to do. For people celebrate wins and compel others to a higher way of living. Against people repel. For people compel.

Jesus was a “for” person. He focused on what he was here for. Yes, he periodically tossed tables and called out haters, but his primary message was that God loves the world and wants to save the world (John 3:16-17).

So, we want to cut the confusion and clearly mark what we, at Clear Creek, are for.

We are for...

...Jesus' fame. Paul writes that, in Jesus, “all things were created...and in him all things hold together.” And “he is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:16-18). Jesus is our hero and our helper. The One who sustains and saves us. He is our message.

...our city. God told ancient Israel to “...seek the peace and prosperity of the city...Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7). We love, serve and pray for our city, because God loves our city.

...the next generation. Previous generations sacrificed so we would know Jesus. It is now our privilege to leverage our position and abilities so the next generation can carry the torch of Jesus into the culture and the future.

...empowering people. We seek to help others step into their God-given roles as world-changers in their homes and communities by living lives marked by holiness and dependence on God (Ephesians 4:11-16).

...restoration and reconciliation. We are appointed and empowered by God to speak vision and value into others' lives (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). We go where others fear to go and do what others won't so that all may be reunited to their loving God.

This is what we are for. So, let's go for it together.

Children Taking Next Steps

In our Children's Ministry we are always looking to highlight how well our parents are modeling discipleship before their children and teaching them to grow in their faith. We have recently seen several instances in which our young ones have demonstrated their faith.

Mason Long, his sister and mother were at Chick-Fil-A one day and he was playing in the play place with a little boy he had never met before. Mason's kindness to Alex led his mom to meet Stephanie Long and begin a conversation which ultimately led to a discussion about church and an invitation to come to Clear Creek. Alex and his parents came to Clear Creek the following Sunday to learn more about our church, to worship God and take their next step with Jesus – all because little Mason befriended a stranger and showed him the love of Jesus. Mason and Stephanie are taking their next steps in faith.



I saw a touching story on Facebook one day about another one of our younger children. Meghan Phillips wrote about how their family prays together every night before bed with Mark and Meghan asking God for specific requests for their family as well as other family and friends. Up until this particular evening, Tre' always prayed general prayers, but on this night he put his arms around his parents and prayed specifically for them and the concerns they were facing. WOW! How precious is the heart of this young disciple who realizes he is not the center of the universe and feels compelled to go to the Father on behalf of someone other than himself. Tre' is learning to take his next steps in faith.

Another young one who is learning from his parents is Crew Dolberry. Zack told me how excited Crew was to attend "big" worship one Sunday because he was going to be giving his money to Jesus during the contribution time. Zack and Jill have taught Crew to follow Dave Ramsey's Junior Program by dividing any money he receives into 3 categories – Give, Save, Spend. When Crew was told that he would be going to "big" worship that Sunday for training instead of Wee Worship and was told what it would look like, Crew was excited to take all of his "Give" money to put in the collection basket for Jesus and the church. What a pure heart to want to give it all to Jesus! Crew is taking his next steps in faith.

Finally, I was reminded recently of another "giving it all" story from a few months back. Brock Beach received a large sum of money for his birthday and heard a lesson about giving "because it all belongs to God anyway" and was touched in his heart to give it all to God because Brock had everything he needed already. How humbling to hear about the generous attitude of a young person who so readily and willingly trusts God. Brock is taking his next steps in faith.

As you can tell our young ones are being taught what a disciple of Christ should be doing and how they are to be growing in their faith as they age. The Children's Ministry at Clear Creek is doing what it can to educate and motivate, but it is imperative that parents are daily teaching by word and example to demonstrate what it looks like to take their next steps in faith as well – just as these parents are doing.



Counting the Steps

It's amazing to see students move closer to Jesus. No matter how many times we've seen God work in this way through the UCM college ministry, it never gets old. Whether it's a lifelong Christian, skeptical agnostic or follower of another religion, God softens hearts and grows faith as His people faithfully reach out in love.

Clara is a sophomore at UTC who was first invited into the UCM family by CJ, another sophomore. CJ and Clara got to know each other in a Women's Studies class their freshmen year. Even though Clara wasn't a Christian, she was willing to give UCM a try because of CJ's genuine love and persistence. *One step towards Jesus.*

At first, Clara politely disagreed with most of the Christian views expressed. Her beliefs and lifestyle are common on a college campus, but pretty out of place in a church setting. Despite this, other students in UCM were eager to welcome her, listen to her and show her love.



Clara (above with red hair) and other UCM students serving people on the streets

Near the end of the semester, Clara was about to go home after our weekly meeting. As she opened the door, she stopped and said out loud, "I think I'm gonna give this Jesus thing a try." *One more step.*

Over the summer, Clara's mom started going to the doctor to be treated for cancer. Clara asked her UCM family to pray and her mom was soon healed. When UCM students pointed to God and his ability to answer prayer Clara replied, "I've never really believed in prayer, but it seems like there's something to it." *Step number three.*

"I've never really believed in prayer, but it seems like there's something to it"

About a month ago, Clara was in a discussion group at our weekly meeting. The first question was about people's previous experiences with Christian groups. Clara said that every Christian group she's ever known was full of "horrible people and cliques." The next question was about any community, religious or not, that was a good experience. Clara looked at us and said, "The UCM is the best community I've ever been a part of. They welcome me, they don't judge me and they're real." *Forget about counting the steps, this is exciting!*

Each week brings new stories of students running towards Clara (and others like her) with boldness and love. There are conversations about deep, personal issues and faith. Lots of patient listening. Prayer. Coffee and study times.

We're thankful for the chance to know Clara and we pray that God keeps working in her heart!

Draw Others In



On a Wednesday in early August, our seventh-grade girls small group invited the brand new sixth-grade girls to have a pre-church meal with them at Wendy's. On the face of it, this may seem like a minor thing, but it's actually a huge testament to the desire of the older girls to draw the new recruits into the community of the youth ministry. Every fall, CCYM gains a new group of fresh young students, and ahead of these students are seven years of exposure to all the things CCYM has to offer. Devotionals, retreats, small groups with mentors, mission trips, fellowship activities, and discipleship training are just a few of things we hope will help them journey towards becoming a committed adult disciple. However, as many of these 11 year olds have attested to over the years, entering the youth room for the first time, where everyone seems MUCH bigger and older, can be pretty intimidating and it often takes a little while for our newest class to feel fully at home amongst the older students.

That's why what our seventh-grade girls did is so wonderful. This small group is led by Christy Beach and Courtney Reynolds, who were also these girls' leaders last school year, and though each insists they were not responsible for this idea, they do deserve recognition for leading their girls in such a way that they felt empowered to minister to others. When we see examples of our youth taking ownership of their church community and actively working to draw others in, it's powerful evidence that they are learning to BE the church and not just attend one. I imagine the sixth graders who attended this evening meal won't soon forget the hospitality shown them, and perhaps, they'll want to do the same for younger students in the future.

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BE the church and not just attend one."*

The (football) fields of harvest

Every Saturday for 8 weeks in the fall our campus hosts hundreds of visitors who come to enjoy youth flag football. Clear Creek partners with Upward Sports to run a youth league for boys and girls from Kindergarten through 6th grade with the mission of sharing Jesus with children and families. Each week at practice Christian coaches share a verse from God's word or prayer time with the kids which we pray is planting seeds that will grow throughout the community for years to come. The siblings, parents, and friends of our 225 football players come multiple times per week to the fields behind our building to support their favorite flag football player, but more importantly to be exposed to Jesus.

This season we've had Clear Creek members pray with mothers whose husbands have abandoned their families and coaches have prayed with children who are going through substantial physical or emotional struggles. Players have supported a teammate through the tragic loss of a sibling. Parents have encouraged each other and cheered for one another's kids. It's a place where healthy competition meets the spirit of Christ.

Jesus tells us in John 4 that the fields are ready to be harvested. After a visit to one of our Upward game-days, this becomes quite evident. There are unchurched and de-churched families right behind our building every week that come to encourage their kids in athletics but leave with an opportunity to draw closer to Jesus through the things their children learn at practice or in games. Please pray that the fruit of this good work continues to be seen for many years.



Diggin' a Ditch

There is an amazing story in 2 Kings where the prophet Elisha tells the armies of three kingdoms to dig ditches in a valley in the middle of the desert because, as a way to help them, God is going to fill that valley with water. The ditches are dug, the water fills them, and everyone is happy. Can we consider for a moment, though, how crazy it must have sounded to the men digging those ditches when the order was passed down to them? Ditches? For water? In the dessert? They obviously didn't know the God that we know. Some people take steps because they know what will happen, but followers of Jesus take steps because we know the God who makes things happen.

Our goal was to create a safe place for people who are struggling or have struggled with addiction. Our problem was that we only knew of two people who wanted a place like that. When we began to dream with Shane and Analisa Shepard about what a small group like that would look like, we ended every conversation with "...but we may not have anyone come. And if we don't, we need to be ok with that." So instead of trying to "dig our ditch" after God sent the water (which we sometimes have a tendency to do), we committed to start the group and trusted that God would do what He said He would.

Spoiler alert: He did. People who haven't been to church in years (or ever) now look forward to getting up early on Sunday morning. People who never saw themselves wanting ownership are stepping up to lead the group when the leaders have to miss. People who never thought that church could be for "a person like me" now KNOW that church is exactly that place... because they were able to see what the rest of us already know: that we are all imperfect people that serve a perfect God.

Let us all pray for courage to take our next step, dig our ditches, and watch God provide.

Taking Ownership

There is constantly growth and development happening within the youth ministry and anyone who has been a part of it can attest to the blessing that it is. The desire for a maturing relationship with Christ is a common trait amongst these students.

Specifically, the upper classmen of this ministry have expressed a desire to lead and take ownership of the youth group. A lunch was hosted in The Creek for all juniors and seniors to share some of their wisdom as well as help vision cast for the future of the youth group. During this lunch it was apparent not only how much they love this group and each other, but how much ambition they have for this group to be the best it can be. A plethora of good ideas were suggested by these leaders. Leah Gray specifically expressed an interest in creating



more opportunities for bonding and community building. Hannah Ray and Luke Tucker both agreed that they would like to have opportunities to lead in small group discussions with younger students. Addie Stone mentioned an interest in creating better communication for youth group events. Various other students suggested restructuring how Wednesday nights are conducted in The Creek.

It is inspiring to be a part of a ministry in which the students want to take ownership, lead, and provide the best experience for their fellow students to grow. It has been said that leadership (or lack there of) of the high schoolers is what can make or break a youth group. Based on the ambition displayed by these upper-classmen, its safe to assume CCYM won't be breaking any time soon.

a ripple effect

One of my favorite things about meeting in a small group is getting to bring all of our prayer requests to the table and pray over them as a community. We learn so much about who and what is on people's hearts. A woman in our small group continually brought her friend's name to the table. She asked that we pray for her friend at work who seemed to be searching for something more. She hoped that one day she'd be willing to visit our church family on a Sunday.

We lifted her name up several times. The woman in our small group continually invited her to come to church and invested time with her outside of the building, as well. As a group, we were excited to see her visit Sunday Worship one morning. We silently cheered and were eager to get to meet the woman we had been praying for.

After a few weeks, I noticed my friend from small group wasn't at church. I asked her husband if she was sick, and luckily she was not. Her friend that we had been praying for wanted to try some other churches that were a closer fit to what she grew up with, so our friend offered to visit them with her.

I was personally blown away by this and I'm sure others were as well. She chose to put herself out there and step out of her normal routine of comfort to support her friend's quest for a church home. The reminder she can give us all is this: sometimes discipleship requires removing ourselves from our comfort zone to support others in their walk with Christ. That obedience has a ripple effect that surpasses what we are able to see, but we know God's hand is in it all.

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Loving Mother. Big Black Tahoe.

Six years ago, Karen Brown joined Cry for the Broken. When the outreach began with nothing but a whisper and a prayer, Karen was there willing to do whatever it took to lead broken women to Jesus. She and her husband, Garry Brown, recently began coming to Clear Creek and we are so glad to have them with us!

Karen tirelessly works for those who Cry for the Broken serves. She drives twice a month on outreach. She goes out to the jail twice a month to minister to the ladies, always hoping to see one that she knows. She is the backbone of the organization, planning Walk the Streets in Her Shoes and The Street-Side Soup Kitchen each year. She has been on many late night missions and has done countless rescues for women who are looking for a way out.

She always smiles when she talks about how the girls on the street love seeing her "big black Tahoe" coming. They jump up and down and flag her down, often running into her arms for a hug and a prayer.

Recently, Karen spoke about a young woman in jail that wants to forgive her father for unspeakable things he did to her when she was three years old. Karen listened to her like a loving mother and shared the love of Jesus with her. The girl said she was incarcerated for her first criminal charge and the judge was going to let her go free. She asked the judge to put her in jail instead. She wants to change. Karen is there. Faithful. Waiting for these kinds of opportunities to let women know Cry for the Broken and Clear Creek Church of Christ are there for them. We are so grateful for Karen and her obedience to Jesus.



We love celebrating what Jesus is doing at Clear Creek! Throughout our congregation, people are serving in many different ways and bringing others into life changing relationships with Jesus Christ. In each issue of Celebration Magazine we highlight a few of these stories, but we know there are many more stories that are left untold.

Each of us is living a story that needs to be shared. When we share our stories, we're not seeking credit for ourselves, but glory for Jesus! Stories give God a powerful opportunity to shine His light and show the world who He really is. We are the hands and feet of Jesus in our community and we want to glorify God by proclaiming what He's done and what He is still doing.

If you have a story about God working through the family here at Clear Creek whether through service, discipleship or outreach, we want to hear it! We want to highlight stories so that together we can celebrate our God!

