

Called to **Explore**

ANNUAL FOCUS

September 2018–June 2019
Williamsburg Community Chapel

Goal:

The entire Chapel family would clearly hear Jesus' call to go forth on the greatest expedition of all, to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, and would respond with tangible action to His calling.

Key Verse:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." —Acts 1:8

Annual Focus Resources:

Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory
by Tod Bolsinger

Description of the Focus:

In Acts 1:8 we see Jesus' disciples are *called to explore*, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." When Jesus says, "you will be...", He is not offering an optional, extra-credit assignment for particularly eager disciples. He is commanding everyone who follows Him to begin a great expedition; in truth, the greatest expedition ever undertaken, for on this expedition His disciples are to give witness to the world's true Lord, Jesus Christ, in every place and to every people.

While Jesus' command is daunting, it is complemented by a promise. "You will be" is both a command and a promise. While history's great explorers set off without knowing if they would ultimately reach their destination, Jesus foreshadows the success of the disciples' mission. The disciples *will be* witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. We are commanded to go and promised to arrive.

Are we ready to explore? From September 2018 to June 2019, with Jesus' command and promise in view, we will answer these questions as a Chapel family: Do we clearly hear Jesus' call? How have we been equipped, especially over the past two years studying Jesus' Kingdom Movement, for the expedition?

What resources will we need to sustain the journey? Where is Jesus calling us to explore individually and corporately? And most importantly, will we be obedient to His call? Our prayer is that we may answer these questions, and any others Jesus lays before us, with dogged perseverance, giving appropriate weight to His command, and with deep peace, trusting Jesus' promise to guide this greatest of all expeditions to the greatest of all

destinations: His Lordship, over His Kingdom, all the way from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth. It is to this expedition and destination that we are called, for we are *called to explore*.

Origins of the Focus:

During the 2017 annual elder retreat the elders fulfilled their responsibility as “overseers” to seek Jesus’ will for His church at the Chapel and set the strategic direction that would ensure we followed Jesus where He was leading. The elders summarized the direction in the phrase, “Go forth.”

Over the past two years the Chapel family has immersed itself in learning about the Kingdom movement Jesus came to inaugurate *here and now*, even as we wait for its full installation *there and then*. The directive to “go forth” seeks to build on the lessons learned during our annual focuses on *Movement* and *Kingdom* by encouraging the entire Chapel Family to take practical steps to apply what we have learned together.

Pastoral Perspective on the Focus:

We have spent two years as a church focusing on the topics of *Movement* and *Kingdom*. Our year studying *Movement* called us to embrace a paradigm shift when we think about church: from institution to movement. We might name this year, “*ready:*” get *ready* for what Jesus wants to do. Our year studying *Kingdom* taught us what Jesus wants to do through His people, namely to participate in His Kingdom mission to make disciples in every sphere of life and on every distant shore of our world. We might name this year, “*set:*” ensure we are set up to understand the role we are to play on Jesus’ mission. The coming year entitled *Called to Explore* should be thought of as the final episode in a trilogy. Once you are *ready* and *set*, the next obvious move is to go: to take action on what we know Jesus has asked us to do. Going forth to act on what we have learned over the past two years is what this third year is all about.

This call to “go forth,” and focus on Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8, which is summarized in this year’s annual focus title, *Called to Explore*, comes providentially at the same time as Jesus has prepared the beginning of His *Next 40-year* journey for our family of faith. It is no accident that at the same moment plans are being made, resources are being gathered, and people are being asked to participate in the Chapel’s *Next 40* initiatives, Jesus is pushing our church to get equipped for an expedition.

It is encouraging to see how our *Next 40* initiatives align with Jesus call to explore in Acts 1:8:

- Jerusalem (right where you are) = Worship Buddies facility buildout and program expansion
- Judea and Samaria (respectively, close by but culturally similar and close by but culturally different) = Church plant
- End of the earth (further than you ever thought Jesus would take you) = partnership with International Cooperating Ministries (ICM) to combat sex trafficking and plant churches in Thailand

In addition, the “**fourth initiative**,” which is “**you**,” will challenge all of us to become explorers. We cannot rely on the church to explore on our behalf. Jesus’ command is to all disciples in all generations. Instead of asking why the Chapel is not engaged in a particular ministry or area of need, this Annual Focus will push us to turn that question around and ask, “What step do I need to take to get engaged in a particular ministry or area of need?”

Quotations:

The following quotations help fill out and augment our approach to this year’s Annual Focus:

1. *“If you want to build a ship, don’t summon people to buy wood, prepare tools, distribute jobs, and organize the work, rather teach people the yearning for the wide, boundless ocean.”* —Antoine de Saint-Exupery
 - As I weighed how practical I should get in an Annual Focus intended to help people make tangible progress in going forth to be Jesus’ witnesses in every aspect of their lives and to every person they encounter, I sensed that something beyond a focus on application was needed. Practical application, no matter how insightful and helpful, has a shelf life. Rather than a year focused solely on application, we will target all of our spiritual senses with Jesus’ call to explore, including instilling in people a deep yearning for the expedition to which Jesus has called them.
2. *“Abiding leads to adventure.”*—Dick Woodward
 - Each week as we worship together we see John 15:5 emblazoned on stained glass, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” May this be a weekly reminder for our community that true abiding leads to adventure.

3. *“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”—Isaiah 49:6*
 - As we study Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8, it is important to note that God has always called His people to explore to the ends of the earth. Jesus’ command calls the disciples to fulfill God’s age-old plan, not to do something new.

4. *“We need each other.”* —Rev. Dr. Reginald F. Davis
 - As we embrace our call to explore as a church family, we must remember Pastor Davis’ word to us, *“We need each other.”* It will be tempting to think that what one person is called to do is more important than what another person is called to do. It will be tempting to give in to society’s culture of division. It will be tempting to blame others when new obstacles on the journey emerge. Let us continually come back to the Apostle Paul’s admonishment to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12, so beautifully summarized by Pastor Davis, *“We need each other.”*

Annual Focus Sermon Series Overview

Annual Focus Kick-Off Sunday, Sept. 9

This Sunday we will launch the Annual Focus, *Called to Explore*. We will study our key verse, Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth,” and outline our goal for the year: The entire Chapel family would clearly hear Jesus’ call to go forth on the greatest expedition of all, to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, and would respond with tangible action to His calling.

September 9: *Called to Explore*, Acts 1:1-11

SERIES 1 **Explore God** September 16–October 28 (7 Weeks)

Everyone has questions. While our questions may be many or few, most of us have at least seven: Does life have a purpose? Is there a God? Why does God allow pain and suffering? Is Christianity too narrow? Is Jesus really God? Is the Bible reliable? Can I know God personally? These questions are grappled with by scholars, school children and everyone in between. They are the seven big questions everyone has when they get honest about exploring God. In partnership with many churches in the Historic Triangle, the Explore God sermon series, coupled with intentional processing and discussion in small groups, will help our community wrestle with these questions together and invite others to explore with us.

September 16: *Does Life Have a Purpose?* John 1:1-8

September 23: *Is there a God?* John 1:9-18

September 30: *Why Does God Allow Pain and Suffering?* John 2:1-12

October 7: *Is Christianity Too Narrow?* John 3:1-19

October 14: *Is Jesus Really God?* John 4:1-26

October 21: *Is the Bible Reliable?* John 6:22-51

October 28: *Can I Know God Personally?* John 10:1-21

SERIES 2
Called to Explore
November 4–18 (3 Weeks)

Before any great expedition the explorers must take time to get *ready*. They must take stock of all their supplies to make sure that everything is set and in place, but ultimately all their work is in service of *going on* the expedition. At the beginning of our *Next 40-year* journey as a family of faith, we believe it is time to go. In Acts 1:8 we read, "...and you will be my witnesses..." This is Jesus' call to go. This is His call to explore, to begin the expedition. His disciples spent three years with Him getting *ready*. They spent the past 40 days with Him getting *set*. Now they are called to go. Now they are *called to explore*. Jesus desires this calling to be so clear, He even provides the map for the expedition. He tells His disciples that they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Why does Jesus specifically note these places? What is their significance? Does the map Jesus provided to His disciples still have an application in today's church? These questions will be answered as we track this expedition and examine a scene from each location on Jesus' map. We will take note of how it continues to provide direction for the journey to which Jesus is calling His church at the Chapel as we embark on our *Next 40-year* journey.

November 4: *Called to Explore: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42-47*

November 11: *Called to Explore: Judea and Samaria, Acts 7:59-8:13*

November 18: Commitment Sunday – *Called to Explore: The End of the Earth, Acts 21:1-16*

November 25: Guest Speaker – Rev. Dr. Reginald F. Davis

SERIES 3
Expedition Bethlehem
December 2–24 (4 Weeks plus Christmas Eve)

Christmas represents the greatest expedition ever undertaken. God is the explorer and Bethlehem is the destination. God is on a mission to rescue His creation, and the Gospel writer Luke makes it clear that God assembles a crew to play different roles on this journey. As people are called to join God's expedition to Bethlehem, they are faced with a choice to accept or reject this invitation. Some join the expedition with joy. Others are doubtful that an expedition of this kind is even possible. By examining

God's invitation to become part of His expedition Bethlehem crew, we will become more familiar with the nature and contours of God's call to explore. By examining different responses, we will be challenged to think through how we are responding to God's call to join His expedition in our everyday lives. May we be challenged to make the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, our own as we respond God's invitation, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

December 2: *Zechariah's Response*, Luke 1:1-25

December 9: *Mary's Response*, Luke 1:26-38

December 16: *Joseph's Response*, Luke 2:1-7

December 23: *The Shepherd's Response*, Luke 2:8-21

December 24: *Christmas Eve Meditation: Simeon's Response*, Luke 2:25-25

December 30: Guest Speaker – Michael Simone

SERIES 4

The Great Explorers

January 6–March 3 (9 Weeks)

The Bible is full of great explorers. We read about men and women who heard and accepted God's call to explore throughout the pages of Scripture. Abraham "obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." Esther, knowing the perils of the journey that lay before her cried out, "if I perish, I perish." The Apostle Paul's expeditions included three shipwrecks! He even spent "a night and a day...adrift at sea." This series will examine the lives of the Bible's great explorers and teach us to long for the great adventure every great explorer experienced when they were obedient and set out on the expedition to which God called them.

January 6: *Abraham Part I*, Genesis 11:27-12:9

January 13: *Abraham Part II*, Genesis 12:10-13:4

January 20: *Abraham Part II*, Genesis 21:1-7, 22:1-4

January 27: *Esther Part I*, Esther 1:1-12

February 3: *Esther Part III*, Esther 5:1-8

February 10: *Ruth*, Ruth 1:1-18

February 17: *Paul Part I*, Acts 9:1-22

February 24: *Paul Part II*, Acts 13:1-3, 19:21-20:1

March 3: *Paul Part III*, 2 Timothy 4:1-8

SERIES 5

Explore the Table

March 10–April 21

(7 Weeks including Easter, plus Ash Wednesday,
Maundy Thursday and Good Friday)

We often hear Jesus' call to explore as an invitation to addition. We understand He has commanded us to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, and therefore we get out the to do list. We start thinking of all the things we need to add to our already overcrowded lives if we are going to live obediently to Jesus' command. Yet, in the Gospels, Jesus never appears rushed. He does not scramble from one frantic moment to the next. He is frequently missing from the action only to be found alone in prayer. Jesus does not model a life built on the principle of addition, asking "how can I add more and more activity to my day?" Rather, He models a life built on the principle of alignment: "How can I align every activity of my life with God's call to explore?" During the season of Lent, we will look at how Jesus used even the most ordinary moments, those spent around tables sharing meals, to continue the great expedition of announcing His Lordship in God's Kingdom. We will learn from Jesus' example how to align our ordinary moments with His call to explore.

March 6: *Ash Wednesday Meditation: A Table to Come*, Isaiah 25:6-9

March 10: *At a Table with Sinners*, Luke 5:27-39

March 17: *At a Table with a Pharisee*, Luke 7:36-50

March 24: *At a Table with 5,000*, Luke 9:10-17

March 31: *At a Table with the Powerful*, Luke 14:1-14

April 7: *At a Table with the Father*, Luke 15:11-32

April 14: Palm Sunday – *At a Table with the Despised*, Luke 19:1-10

April 18: *Maundy Thursday Meditation*, Luke 22:14-23

April 19: *Good Friday Mediation*, Luke 23:32-49

April 21: Easter – *At a Table with Jesus*, Luke 24:13-35

SERIES 6
Explore the Holy Spirit
April 28–June 9 (7 Weeks)

At the same moment the disciples are given the call to go and to become explorers by being Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth, they are told to wait. Jesus says something to the effect of, "Go! Now wait." They have just spent three years learning at the feet of Jesus. They have spent the last 40 days getting a refresher course on what the Kingdom is all about. What else could they possibly need? Why delay? Jesus knows that before they explore they must be "clothed with power." This power comes from the Holy Spirit. If we are to be obedient to Jesus' call to explore, we too need to be "clothed with power." This series will examine the role of the Holy Spirit in God's great expedition and teach us how we can, as the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians, "walk in the Spirit" moment by moment as we take practical steps to put into practice Jesus' call to explore.

April 28: *Jesus and the Holy Spirit*, John 20:19-22, Luke 3:21-22, 4:14-21

May 5: *The Promise and Role of the Holy Spirit*, John 14:25-27, 16:7-15

May 12: *Mother's Day – Receiving the Holy Spirit*, Galatians 3:1-9

May 19: *Walking in the Spirit*, Galatians 5:13-26

May 26: *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part I*, Ephesians 4:1-16

June 2: *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part II*, Ephesians 4:1-16

June 9: Pentecost Sunday – *The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, Acts 1:8, 2:1-13

SERIES 7
Summer Bible Study
June 16–September 1 (12 Weeks)

In the summer we will shift to our Summer Bible Study Series. This is our opportunity to study a particular book of the Bible or a series of books that may speak to contemporary issues in our culture today, expand a section of the annual focus, or just dive into a portion of Scripture that we may be unfamiliar with. It is a chance to walk book by book, chapter by chapter, or even verse by verse though a portion of Scripture together as a church community.



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