

COVERED IN HIS DUST

If we are really following Jesus, we will go where He goes.

We will walk behind Him every step of the dusty way.

We will be covered in His dust.

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Pastor's Letter

What It Means to Be Covered in His Dust

There is an ancient Jewish blessing that goes, "May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi."

In the first century AD, a rabbi was a person who was known as a wise teacher, master, and sage. Rabbis would take on disciples who would follow after them to learn all they possibly could. The disciple's goal was to learn by emulating their Rabbi's every move—both his teaching and his lifestyle. It is clear from the Bible that Jesus had a reputation as the greatest of Jewish rabbis—in fact, people like Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Nicodemus all referred to Jesus as "Rabbi."

Sitting: Times of Concentrated Learning

The idea of the "dust blessing" apparently had two connotations. The first connotation is that you would humbly sit amidst the dust of your teacher's feet to learn from him. This is because it was customary to honor a teacher by sitting on the floor while he taught seated in a chair. In fact, there is a common biblical idiom for concentrated study with a rabbinic teacher—"sitting at his feet." For instance, the apostle Paul at one point says that he was educated "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3). Also, Mary, the sister of Martha, is described as sitting at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:39).

Walking: Learning through Living

The second connotation had to do with traveling together and experiencing the subtleties of life. That is because discussions between rabbis and their disciples were not confined to the study hall. Teaching would take place within daily life—walking on the road, in the marketplace, sharing a meal, or while sitting under a tree. The blessing, "May you be covered in his dust," means, therefore, to stay so closely beside him that you literally become covered by the dust billowing up from his footsteps along the way. Good disciples followed their rabbi so closely that they would "walk in his dust." In doing so, they became like the rabbi, their master.

This year at Sunlight, we will have the goal of getting dusty. We will endeavor to be drawn so close to Jesus that we become caked in the dust kicked up by His feet. May we know Jesus. May we know the profundity of His life and teaching. May we know the power of His sufferings and death. And may we know that glory of His resurrection. Let's get covered in His dust together.



Fellowship Hall Grand Opening

Our church is a loving family where everyone is welcome. In January, Sunlight's St. Lucie West campus finished construction of a new Fellowship Hall where we can grow together as a family. This space provides the congregation with a place to enjoy meals, play sports, hold Bible studies, and more! We've even hosted a church painting party!



Community Groups

A Place to Belong!

At all of our campuses, Community Groups provide a place to find accountability, belonging, and care—the ABC's of ministry! Our goal is for each group to be welcoming, engaging, relevant, and helpful. They are a place where people can connect on a deeper level and grow together, a place where any question is welcome, and a place where prayer needs are shared and loving support is felt. In short, our groups are where we follow Jesus together so closely that we hope to end up covered in the dust from his feet!



Pastor Kris Vos at our Lake Worth campus knows the power of small groups. One of his groups is focusing on how to share Jesus in an increasingly post-Christian culture. This "Alpha group" is designed to engage and inspire conversation. Participants explore the big issues around faith like: Who Is Jesus? Why Did Jesus Die? How Can I Have Faith? Why and How Should I Pray and Read the Bible?



Service

Following in the Way of Jesus



► We joined with other churches to clean up our city's streets for an event called #forPSL.

About 130 families in need had a great Thanksgiving meal, thanks to our volunteers! ▼



We sent about 300 shoeboxes filled with toys and the gospel to children all over the world through Samaritan's Purse. ▼



Hurricane Irma provided us with an opportunity to show what it means to carry one another's burdens. Three teams of volunteers headed out into the community to help those in need by putting up shutters. ▶



Grace Packs: Making a Difference in Jesus' Name

Each weekend, about 600 local children from 24 schools go home with food for the weekend, thanks to an army of 300 volunteers. And it all started when two women in our church simply said, "Yes," when they heard God calling them.

In 2009, Angee Walsh started a ministry that sent backpacks of food home with Manatee Academy students who were in need. In the years that followed, Laura Klosterman began a similar program at Oak Hammock, where she taught deaf students in Pre-K and kindergarten.

The program grew so quickly that Laura decided to quit her job and to devote herself to Grace Packs full-time. She said,

"God has shown me to pray in little things and big things. I literally depend on Him step by step, and He has shown me that He is faithful in amazing ways. He called me to do something that will not allow me to rest on my educational background, on my own laurels. I have to give him total praise. This is His program. It's been so successful, but that's not because of human endeavors. It's truly God at work, and He is so good!"

These two women are examples of what it means to follow Jesus so closely that you end up covered in his dust. They say they experience God leading them and being their provider. "We're feeding kids, but God's feeding us," Laura says.



2017 BY THE NUMBERS

107

Thanksgiving dinners given to those in need

150

Vehicles shown through our new car show community outreach

295

PK-2nd grade students enrolled in Sunlight Christian Academy's two locations

300

People reached at our Hispanic Heritage outreach event

585

Students from 24 local schools fed on the weekends

2

New church plants in Nigeria, bringing our total on the African continent to 5

4,500

Fall Festival attendees

Church Campus Updates

Reaching Out in Love to South Florida

Sunlight Community Church is one church with multiple campuses. In all of the United States, South Florida has the fewest churches per person. For that reason, we are passionate about church planting, and we have found that the multi-campus model best supports pastors in getting new churches planted and growing toward maturity.

Sunlight Lake Worth

By Kris Vos, campus pastor

One of our biggest joys of 2017 was the opening of Sunlight Christian Academy Lake Worth! We have 10 students and already we are seeing families from our preschool begin to join our church. It has been incredible to see God use the preschool to build relationships with young families in our community.

We served our community by gathering Blessing Bags filled with personal hygiene items that so many need. We also partnered with Kiwanis and the City of Lake Worth to assemble 85 bikes that were given away to kids in our community.

In 2017, we also celebrated our first infant baptism, and CROS Ministries Summer Camp once again filled our facility with families. Our Sunkids children and Sun-



light Christian Academy students presented a Christmas program. One of our key leaders remarked how encouraging it was to see a children's Christmas program in our church after waiting so many years. It truly is a beautiful sign of life and health in a church!

Sunlight Español

By Juan Sierra, campus pastor

Sunlight Español enjoyed a busy 2017. We had many family activities from game night to a day of fun in the park. We saw spiritual commitments this year with some members getting baptized, some children making professions of faith, and participation at our first marriage conference.

Our youth class has grown quite a bit, and we have expanded the group to participate in different activities. We were quite involved in the community through



Want to know more about our campuses?
Visit sunlightcc.org or look them up on Facebook!

Outreach

From the Harvest, for the Harvest

"Big Give" blessed community in many ways

More than 140 people came together to share the love of God with others during the Christmas season. Each family devoted a whole day and about \$100 to bless other people by:

- Supporting the Humane Society with supplies and dog food
- Carolling to the residents of King's Isles
- Completing handyman tasks for members of our congregation
- Painting the offices of Suncoast Mental Health Center
- Raising money to support the efforts of Ronald McDonald House
- Raising \$10,500 to offset the cost of child care for a family adopting twins
- Stocking the shelves at a local food pantry, Graceway Village
- Contributing and sorting donations to Hope's Closet
- Spreading holiday cheer through random acts of kindness



Our campuses all celebrated Christmas in ways that were designed to reach out to the community. Our St. Lucie West Campus held a candle-light service featuring Jack Cassidy from NBC's The Voice. ►

Christian Illusionist Brett A. Myers took our stage for two special Christmas-themed shows. It was one of our most effective Christmas outreach events yet! ▼



We now open our gym to the community on Sunday nights for a new ministry called "Sunlight Hoops." Pastor Aaron and a team of volunteers share God's love and the good news with those who come to play ball. ►

Biggest and Best Fall Festivals yet!

Cars were parked almost a mile away at our St. Lucie West campus, with families willing to walk to the candy canon, pony rides, a petting zoo, trunk-or-treat, an indoor food court, family games, face painting, mini golf, rock painting, and live performances in Noah's ark! Between this event and others at the other campuses, we estimate 4,500 people or more got to experience the love of God at our Fall Festivals!





► More than 60 volunteers created a rainforest themed adventure for 400 children at this year's Vacation Bible School. Each day, we learned from the parables, had high-energy worship, played games, ate snacks, and made crafts!

In addition to having fun, our students got to work raising money for orphaned children all around the world through the Rice Bowls Ministry! ►



► Redeem is our group that helps young adults understand who they are and who God is in the midst of a crucial junction in their lives. It's more than a Bible study, but a place where young adults can find lasting relationships. Some of our favorite events are family-style meals around the holidays. We call it Redeemsmas!

Working with youth can get messy! For the first time in 2017, our middle school group outgrew our high school group, as Sunlight Christian Academy's first preschool graduates began entering middle school. ►



NEXT GENERATION MINISTRY



► We refer to Sunkids as our "year-long VBS" because it brings a level of excitement and imagination to our study of God's Word. Our theme is super heroes, and Pastor Scott even plays a character for us!



► We offer girls clubs and boys clubs called GEMS and Heroes. Each seeks to minister to young people and help them in their walk with the Lord.

► Sunlight Christian Academy ministered to our highest number of students and families yet in 2017. Our Port St. Lucie enrollment reached 285, and we are also pleased to announce the opening of our Lake Worth location with an enrollment of 10 students.

The addition of a second grade class this year has been a tremendous blessing, and we are excited to continue our growth through third grade in the coming year.

Another milestone in the life of our school was our very first field trip. Our entire elementary school of 80 students enjoyed their first theater experience at the Lyric in downtown Stuart, where they enjoyed the Nutcracker, followed by pizza and playtime at the park.

God has blessed us abundantly this year, and we are thankful for your continued prayers and support!



THANK YOU

Your prayers, service and generous support in 2017 made all that you've read about in this booklet possible.

We can't wait to see what God will accomplish through us in 2018!



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