



# HISTORY INTEGRITY TRUTH SCRIPTURE

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## January 2023 Reflect, Refine, Regroup

This time of year, I'm sure your email, social media, media media, and mailbox gets clogged with everyone's special year-end reflections. We seem to like doing a year in review and seeing where we've been. It's also the time of year we make those big decisions – to join the health club and exercise every day through January 3, to spend more time with our family until about the second week in January, to attend church more regularly and eagerly at least through the celebration of the baptism of Jesus – decisions which will often not stick very well. Yet it's a traditional time of consideration and recommitment.

Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is all about face to face, in-person, on-campus pastoral care for people in all parts of the collegiate community, whether students, faculty, staff, or administrators. Though we're in America's heartland, we recognize that in Isaiah 49:6 God's vision reaches far beyond our home, to all people of all nations. He has providentially brought people from many nations to our doorstep. Through our ministry activities, He has also brought people from more than twenty nations to our living room!

### **Reflect**

During 2022, University restrictions on gathering and activities gradually dissolved. Personnel, including students, became more involved in face to face campus life, along the lines of what most of us have considered to be “normal” college life. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry was re-inventing our activities as needed, starting our old programs, and becoming more visible and active on campus.

My work as a vacancy pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church came to a close at the end of July. It was certainly a blessing to me and my family to be there, and I have been told the congregation appreciated me as well, but it is a joy to see them under the care of their own pastor from their own church body. The timing of the transition was particularly challenging. Believe it or not, the prime months to disappear from campus and visit churches (We call it “itineration” when we go places and ask for money) are May and June. July is when international scholars start coming into the community. The big welcome activities are mostly around the second week of August.

All this means that in August when I was again free to travel on the weekends and to spend lots of weekday time on campus, I hit the ground running, and running fast! Since August I've spent 11 Sundays in churches outside of Columbia. On most of those Sundays I had an opportunity to present the work of Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry to a congregation, though a couple were simply pulpit fills and two were pastor installations. Meanwhile, back in Columbia, we've hosted eight fellowship events at our home, including a Thanksgiving dinner and an Advent/Christmas party. We have fairly consistently had about fifteen people present, including many new faces from foreign countries, mostly where Christianity is virtually unknown. We've had our regular Tuesday evening topic discussions at the Heidelberg Restaurant, and our Thursday Lunch and Learn Bible study at the Mizzou Student Center. I try to be visible with a “Free Listens and Prayers” sign in public spaces around the University at least six to ten hours a week. People regularly stop by, and we're starting to get traction and create community

among the general public. I also spend part of Monday evening with a fraternity that has a Christian mission statement. They appreciate the presence of a pastor, as well as the prayers. Recently some of their new members have asked me if I would stay around during their study hours Monday evenings. Apparently it's helpful in some way. We're starting to have some meaningful discussions about Christian ideas occasionally. Again, face-to-face pastoral care on-site.

In addition to the different activities and visibility, I've had a number of opportunities to volunteer with the International Center. Recently, their advisors have taken to inviting my participation at social activities set up for the visiting scholars and "sponsored students" (people such as Fulbright scholars or others whose expenses are being paid by companies or foundations). I had a recent visit to the graduate admissions office, where the admissions counselors wanted to know what I did as a resource to them. On the way out of that visit, I met a gentleman who looked somehow familiar. It turns out he is the president of the University. He said, I think genuinely, that Wittenberg Door is welcome on his campus.

### **Refine**

Having the time to concentrate on presence on campus has brought about some refinements. Traffic patterns changed during the past two years. The times of day which were productive for meeting and visiting with students and staff in the past don't seem to work so well now. But I've refined my schedule based on the new community traffic patterns. I now typically have about a dozen meaningful public contacts per week, a few with people I've never met before. The visibility is also bringing increasing involvement with the international graduate student community. I'm also broadening the scope of drop-in visits at faculty, staff, and administrative offices. Being present but not interfering is a tricky job, but it's entirely possible. The result is building bridges with dozens of people and becoming a known quantity, welcome as a positive good for the campus population. We hope this will lead to increasing involvement with those Christians we have located, as they learn to live out their Christianity in the academic environment and become leaders themselves.

### **Regroup**

Sometimes after careful analysis of what you've been doing, you keep doing the same thing. That's a good goal! What do we want to pursue in 2023?

Our Bible and topic discussions have an inherent value. They are under-attended, but of great value to the participants. We'll keep them going as they have been, but make it more obvious to the many people we're meeting that those purposeful discussions are at the heart of why we are present on campus. If anything needs to shift to a different time or day, that's entirely possible.

Our dinner and conversation evenings are difficult to execute. We're worn down by the end of those Fridays! But they are gaining traction and I think provide a great way to build community with a dozen or more non-Christians. Attendance was oddly fluid during the 2021-22 academic year. It seems to be stabilizing a little but, with regular attendees emerging. We'll keep it going!

English coaching was always one of the prime ways that I could make contact with people and bring them into our other activities. It's gone dormant. The international students and scholars I've been meeting have less need for conversation coaching than they did in some years past. It still remains an option and available, but it may be on the decline for 2023.

A word about support raising follows in our financial update. The short story is that in 2022 we raised about 23% of our budget. I'm working on additional work for pay which can still be coordinated with what I do on campus. My long term goal remains – by the time I need to retire, we want to see Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry able to call and fully support a full time pastor.

This is a long newsletter. But there you have it. Please pray with us as we seek to bring meaningful, face-to-face pastoral care to all who desire it in the collegiate communities of Columbia, Missouri. You can help us reach out to those who are already Christians and who are not yet Christians with the loving friendship they should expect in the body of Christ.

## Wittenberg Door Financial Update



Thanks to the numerous people who contacted me in December asking about special needs for Wittenberg Door!

As you read above, during 2022 we raised less than 25% of a budget which would allow Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry to provide in-person face-to-face pastoral care on a full time basis. Please consider whether you can support this ministry financially in 2023, and also whether any friends, family, or associates would like to be involved.

It's been a hard year for all of us, with higher inflation rates and lower returns on our investments or retirement plans than we've seen in recent history. But it's also a time when jobs are plentiful! I hope we can all consider our giving as a long-term investment in the work we want to see accomplished on campus. Let's keep this Christ-centered work going and growing! The Wittenberg Door 300 needs to be up to about 300 individuals as soon as possible so we can continue the care of souls on campus.

What am I asking you to do? If you are not already part of the Wittenberg Door 300, please join with us. Tell those who don't know about the life-changing work of Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry that they can also take part in our ministry. Refer them to our website and, if they are in the Columbia area, invite them to our activities.

Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at [www.wittenbergcomo.com](http://www.wittenbergcomo.com) and click on "about" and "support us."

## Upcoming Activities:

Mondays at 5:00 pm – Fraternity Dinner and Chapter Meeting

Tuesdays at 5:30 pm – Heidelberg Discussions (at the Heidelberg!)

Thursdays at 12:30 pm – Lunch and Learn Bible discussion at the MU Student Center

Mondays at 7:00 pm starting January 9 – ALTS course on Ephesians

Thursdays at 7:00 pm starting January 12 – ALTS Greek 2 course

Friday, January 20 – 6-8 pm Dinner and Conversation Evening

Friday, February 3 – 6-8 pm Dinner and Conversation Evening

### **Remember to get your church on my calendar!**

Watch the calendar at [www.wittenbergcomo.com](http://www.wittenbergcomo.com), follow our Facebook page, and friend WDCM Chaplain on Facebook to see times and places where Pastor Spotts can be found around campuses in coffee shops or restaurants!

**We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to [www.wittenbergcomo.com](http://www.wittenbergcomo.com) to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!**