

January 2024



Greetings in Christ Jesus:

2023 was a year of both great gains and precious losses at MainStreet Covenant. “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away,” Job says. We walked two members to eternity’s gate—our church matriarch, Bonnie Blair, and our church uncle Kevin Krotzer. We also welcomed many new faces to MainStreet including a handful of new college students joining us on Sunday nights—*last Sunday they filled half the room!* During warmer months, we held Sunday gatherings in our home, embracing a “House Church” model with fellowship meals, songs on the deck, digging into Scripture, with kids Sunday school in the basement and ending with living room eucharist—all with “glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46). The rest of the year we gather Sundays at St. Martins By the Lake.

MainStreet remains committed to reaching beyond our walls with two new mission partnerships: 1) fighting human trafficking through the Covenant’s **FREE Initiative** and 2) supporting **Advocates of Victims of Abuse (AVA)**. We celebrated 10 years of supporting Seth and Leslie Jurgenson on the mission field with **Students International in Nicaragua**, and a percentage of our income goes back into the church planting work of the Northwest Conference and other global ministries of the ECC. We do a monthly service at **Harrison Bay Senior Living** playing favorite hymns and sharing an uplifting sermon, and brought our Easter service on the road to Harrison Bay for the second year now. On top of leading our Kids Ministry, Keri Berg leads Holy Yoga classes on Zoom, while Pastor Mike Fox is a faithful mentor and encourager—regularly having lunch with MainStreeters and non-MainStreeters alike.

MainStreet continues to send me (Jeremy) out on mission during the week to reach a key demographic often missing in church on Sundays: **college students**. I poured into some 160 students teaching six courses at Crown College, Bethel University, Northwestern, and Solid Rock. I go into these classrooms with a sense of urgency aware of the research indicating that up to **40 million kids raised in the church are likely to leave the faith in the next three decades**. I consider this is a *huge* opportunity to cast a vision of a more Jesus-shaped Christianity and invite these students to commit their one life to advancing His Kingdom.



My **KingdomHarbor.com** writings and **Anchor Podcast** is reaching 600+ subscribers weekly. This summer I developed and piloted my “**Jesus Walks,**” a more immersive discipleship experience taking kingdom apprentices on “wisdom walks” in nature to discuss core teachings of Jesus. We pondered the good shepherd among roaming sheep, being God’s handiwork in a sculpture garden, wondering about “worry” watching the birds and flowers, and a boat ride on Lake Minnetonka discussing faith in the midst of life’s storms.

Our family then endured our own storm this fall as we spent 31 agonizing days with our son Isaak (10 years old) in the ICU at Children’s Hospital. He endured three life-saving surgeries to repair his bowels after swallowing

six magnets. As a family accustomed to serving and helping others in need through our ministry, it was humbling to be on the receiving end of so much love and prayer and support. We are so grateful to God and the prayers of His people everywhere who helped get Isaak home by Thanksgiving with an anticipated full recovery after a harrowing journey.

MainStreet continues to experiment with fresh ways of “doing church” in a rapidly changing culture. We focus more on **forming souls and Jesus-shaped character** than on pursuing organizational growth benchmarks. We introduced Spiritual Direction to our community this year as one new pathway toward deeper growth. Other churches and leaders are slowly catching on to what MainStreet has been about for a dozen years. John Mark Comer, Christian leader and author, wrote recently: **“I am more and more convinced that the future of the church is smaller. It’s around tables, not stages. It’s relational. It’s formational. It’s prayer-based.”** Um, this isn’t the future of the church; it’s getting back to the very roots of the church described in Acts 2 that has always guided MainStreet.

But there is a financial cost to thinking outside the conventional church box. Each new year I get to exercise my faith trusting we’ll have the finances to continue our ministries and provide me a modest salary. Like a missionary abroad, I depend on financial partners like you to do what we do—and we do a lot of ministry with just a total budget of \$85,000.

INCOME	2023 BUDGET	2023 ACTUAL
Partner Giving	29,000	22,600
Tithes/Offerings	56,000	58,330
TOTAL	85,000	80,930

EXPENSES	2023 BUDGET	2023 ACTUAL
Ministry Expenses	3,350	1,018
Mission Partnerships	8,500	7,650
Office/Admin/Services	7,525	5,555
Personnel	59,425	56,608
Rent	5,300	4,775
TOTAL	84,100	75,606

We ended 2023 a bit under budget, but we are so grateful for your contributions this past year and ask for your renewed commitment to our shared mission in the coming year. We are praying for increased support from partners outside MainStreet to continue expanding our mission.

Together in Christ,



Rev. Dr. Jeremy Berg
Lead Pastor
MainStreet Covenant Church
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These sweatshirts cost us a lot!



Karen's Story

"I am so grateful to have found MainStreet Covenant after searching for a church home for over a year. I truly have never experienced anything quite like MainStreet. The details of our services vary from week to week, but the core remains constant: we worship, we contemplate the Scriptures, we lift one another up in prayer, and we celebrate the Lord's Supper. I imagine this is how the early church gathered to worship as well. The warmth and authenticity of MainStreeters creates safety and helps heal past church hurts. I am so grateful to be in a place where my voice and gifts are welcomed and where the leadership models a strong example of following after Christ and his love for his Church."



Student Testimony

"Your class has been such a breath of fresh air for me! It gets me thinking, challenges me and gets me excited about Jesus—especially everything you have said about God's Kingdom. Your passion for the Lord is contagious!"

—Northwestern Student