

“Faithful Through Generations” (God Sightings: When GOD Shows Up – Pt. 1)
(Ps. 77:11-14, John 4:12, Eph. 3:20-21)

- **Meditating on His Miracles**

- **David:** Good morning Connection Church Family! We’ve tried all week to figure out how to preach a sermon with 4 pastors, and here’s what we came up with:
 - **Kari:** Just...
 - **Alan:** Show...
 - **Emily:** UP!
- **David:** That was pretty good! Seriously though, I’m David Layser...
 - **Kari:** I’m Kari Jones...
 - **Alan:** I’m Alan Jones...
 - **Emily:** I’m Emily Layser, and we are all...
 - **ALL:** *Sinners saved by God’s grace.*
- **Kari:** Today, we are celebrating 25 years as a church family!
- **Alan:** 25 years of connecting people with Jesus and the new life He offers.
- **Emily:** And as part of this celebration, we’re actually taking *the next month* to walk through a series called “God Sightings: When GOD Shows Up,” where we’ll look at *miracle stories* in the Bible *and* in our own Church Family.
- **David:** We get to kick this off in a really special way today by talking about how God is “Faithful Through Generations” from the perspective of the *generations* of pastors here at CCC.
 - Psalm 77:11-14 is going to be a key passage for this series. Verses 11-12 say, **“I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”** We know how important it is to “meditate on God’s Word,” but how cool is it to think about meditating on God’s *miracles*? When we look back and remember *all the amazing things God has already done*, it fills us with even more hope and faith for the future, for *all God is going to do*! That’s really what we’re here to do as we celebrate 25 years today.

- **Emily:** Alan and Kari, you've been in this story from day 1! God laid these dreams on *your hearts*, and all those who started this new adventure with you 25 years ago. What has it been like to see His faithfulness through the generations, what are the “God Sightings” and miracles you've meditated on the most through the years that stand out to you today?
- **Looking Back...**
 - **Alan:** ***“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*** (Eph. 3:20-21)
 - **Kari:** God’s amazing grace was at work years before we had our first service at Connection. Living in Seaford, we were driving to Newark to visit family. Driving on Rt 896, we noticed new houses being built. We’d read in the paper of the explosion of new housing in Middletown and there it was right in front of us. As we drove over Summit Bridge, we said “wouldn’t this be a great place to start a church.” We spent time off and on dreaming about what that would look like but there were things like seminary, ordination, serving our churches, and four kids that kept that in the dreaming stage.
 - **Alan:** Five years later, planting a church was becoming a reality. We’re on a plane returning from a gathering that focused on ministry with Generation X and Y - people in their 20’s and 30’s at the time. The room was full of church planters from around the world. On the way home from that Conference, in the air space above Philadelphia, I was nudged by the Holy Spirit. “These new houses going up in Middletown are nearly all two-story, four-bedroom. These aren’t starter homes and they’re not 55+.” I hear in my spirit, “Alan, these homes are for families. This church is going to be for families. What kind of model will you and Kari be if you’re serving different places (like we had been in Seaford). You need to work together.” Work together? You’ve got to be kidding. Us work together?
 - We got off the plane, Friday at 10:30 PM, and called our District Superintendent, the one who oversaw our District downstate. He was really tickled. NOT. We made an appointment to meet the next week.

- **Kari:** Waiting at home that night on the counter full of mail is an article telling of a young girl asking our bishop if God has a wife. The bishop said that God is spirit, beyond gender or marriage concerns. And the girl said, then how was God's son, Jesus, born? Good question. The bishop then said, well, yes, God had a partner in this great miracle. Mary was her name. He then continued the article by saying that God's way is to invite us to be partners in God's great miracle of bringing new life through Jesus Christ to our world. God does not do it alone. Mary said, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord." The bishop went on to talk about being servants and then ended the article with this: **"What super, impossible notion has God whispered in your ear? What is your response?"** When we met the District Superintendent the next week we took the article with us and shared the super impossible notion of moving us from our churches and appointing us together to plant a new church in Middletown. Immediately following that meeting, we went to Victoria's on the Rehoboth boardwalk for lunch. It was a cold January afternoon. Sitting there at the table, looking at the ocean, God gave us the name of the church: *Connection Community Church*. It wasn't long before the Bishop made the appointments, our home was put up for sale, the U-Haul's arrived, and we moved north.
- **Alan:** In July of 2001, Cornerstone Church, now known as Christ the Cornerstone, just north of us, put us on their staff to share the vision for a new worshipping congregation in Middletown. It's called a parent-child model for church planting. They put plans they had for their church on hold to help us get started, even sharing financial resources to help us put food on our table. Now that's a kingdom mindset, putting Christ first. 13 families from Cornerstone and one from Red Lion United Methodist church became the Core team and we began praying, planning, and doing life together. We did a Bible Study called Experiencing God. We began sharing life in common, like we read about in the Book of Acts, Chapter 2.
- **Kari:** Our first public witness, just a few weeks after meeting one another was the Peach Festival in August, four months before our first worship service. We gave out balloons saying Coming Soon. We said our first service would be on Christmas Eve that year. We just didn't know where it was going to be. Mid-

November, the week before Thanksgiving, we found a warehouse to lease on Green Street in town. Just an empty room. We needed 2 months rent, carpet, and chairs. Those 14 families sacrificially gave so that our first worship service was Christmas Eve, 2001. The room was packed. So much so that we immediately began planning renovations in another part of the warehouse for a larger worship space. Everyone involved took faith steps. Giant faith steps. Faith. That's what we were living on. We're reminded of the definition from the book of Hebrews: **"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Heb. 11:1)**

- **Alan:** We were there at 100 W. Green St for 18 years. During that time, there were professions of faith, baptisms, bible studies, and small groups. We quickly pivoted to hold Easter and Christmas Eve services at the Fire House, Reading or Meredith Middle Schools for more space. We did a lot of different things to connect people with Jesus and the new life He offers. Free car washes, free pancake breakfasts, winter coat giveaways, tootsie-pop giveaways at home football games (we had just one high school at the time), prayer walks, prayer circles. prayer challenges, healing prayer, weekly focused prayer for a year at a time, a thrift shop, a food ministry, the Care Team, Operation Christmas Child, adopting families at Christmas, sending the van to UD to pick up students to come worship, women's retreats, men's retreats, Alpha, Disciple, Walks to Emmaus, Chrysalis, the list goes on and on and on. We formed a deep relationship with a church on the other side of the world and that relationship remains stronger than ever. The bottom line is that we would try anything short of sin to connect people with Jesus and the New Life He offers. We were faithful. We were hopeful. We persevered.
- **Kari:** I was recently on an Emmaus weekend where Andria Smith was the Lay Director. Here's what Andria had to say about our perseverance:
- *The church I attend, Connection Community Church, has lived through a long season of perseverance. We bought 27 acres back in 2007, full of hope and excitement as we currently worshiped in a rented facility. By 2008 we were ready to build - And then the economy collapsed, and we had to put everything on hold.*

Inn 2013, we launched a 3-yr capital campaign and began designing. But when the estimates came back, they were far beyond what we could afford. It felt like another door closing.

- **Alan:** *Then God moved through one contractor who redesigned the project so we could afford to build. we broke ground - and that's when the trials really hit. A \$40,000 sidewalk to nowhere. Telephone poles that had to be moved. And the crushing blow when we were told we faced a \$1,000,000 cost to relocate two gas lines. That moment felt like our lowest point. But we stayed faithful. We trusted that God would handle what we couldn't. And He did. One by one, every obstacle disappeared - with little or no cost to us. The sidewalk, the poles, the gas lines...all resolved in ways only God could orchestrate. Connection Community Church opened its doors on Palm Sunday of 2019.*
- **Kari:** *In 2023, while I (Andria) was serving as Treasurer at Connection, our congregation made the decision to leave the UMC and join the Global Methodist Church. We knew it would come with challenges. The biggest hurdle was securing a new mortgage under our new tax identification number. Our original bank - the one that had financed our building and watched us remain faithful through COVID without missing a single payment - suddenly became uncooperative. Offering us an exorbitant interest rate, far beyond anything reasonable. So we began searching for another lender, another local bank seemed promising and even encouraged us through the process, but when our paperwork reached their mortgage loan committee, we were denied because our debt ratio was too high.*
- **Alan:** *We went back to our original bank, hoping for a change of heart, only to be told they were "getting out of the church business." And then came the blow: they were calling the loan. We were running out of time, running out of options, running out of places to turn.*
 - *But God was not done!*
- **Kari:** *Our Finance Chair found a mortgage broker who located two banks willing to consider us. After countless hours of paperwork, financial reviews, and meetings, Union Bank & Trust in Nebraska agreed to take a chance on us - but it came with a cost. Several families stepped forward and made substantial financial*

commitments, investing in CDs that would be held until we paid the loan down enough to meet the required debt ratio.

○ **Alan:** We were literally HOURS away from our original bank taking control when the new loan was signed. We made it because **God is faithful. We made it because His people remained faithful. We made it because we refused to give up, even when it looked impossible.**

○ **Kari:** It wasn't the first time we were close to the limit. It won't be the last. But the people of Connection are faithful and faith filled. We trust what God says and what God does. We've witnessed God's faithfulness for the past 25 years and we are excited to see what He will do in the next chapter. We can trust God, not just to do what He's been doing, but to do even greater things in the days to come. Emily and David...what's it been like to follow God into this new chapter? And what do you imagine when you think of the "greater things" He has in store?

- **Looking Forward...**

- **Emily:** Wow! Looking back at where God has led us is just a super humbling and amazing. We actually just re-watched the video from February 2025 when you all announced that we would be coming here later that summer. And the one word I kept saying in that video was the "adventure" God has us on!
 - It was 2 years ago, right around this time of year when we began to feel God moving. We'd been serving a church in PA for 7 years, but both David and I realized that change was coming in a way we couldn't explain. God was telling us that *more* was coming, but we had no idea that there were these 2 pastors praying for us BY NAME down here in Delaware! It wasn't long before we were all realizing that God was bringing us together for *yet another miracle story* at Connection—and our family was starting a new adventure with you!
- One thing that stands out as I think back to that season is really *all of you*. This church family opened their arms and accepted us right from the start, really from before the start! The calls, cards, and Facebook messages we received before we even got here. The dozen people who were in our garage when the moving truck pulled up at like 9pm to help us unload and unpack. The hundreds of you who showed up at 2 the meet and greet nights just to shake hands and give hugs. The

meals, the blessings, WOW! You all loved us from the start and brought us into this amazing miracle family that is Connection Community Church. You all have helped us experience God's faithfulness through the generations. As many of you know, and as Kari and Alan's stories testify: when you follow God, it's always an adventure! Honestly, I'd rather be on this adventure with Him than do anything without Him. It makes me excited to think about what's next. If God can do this, what MORE will He do?

- **David:** You know, with God, *there's always more*. It's like Eph. 3 says: *He is able to do immeasurably more*, according to what? *His power at work within us*. For what? *For the glory of God through all generations forever and ever!* Jesus Himself said to His followers, *you will do even greater things*. With God, there's always more! Because we serve an *infinite, everlasting, eternal God*—we'll never stop discovering more of His glory! We'll never stop growing in the grace of who He created us to be. This is the journey He has us on: it isn't something you "arrive" at and stop there—with God, there's always more!
 - The Lord has led Connection Church through 25 years of miracles, growth, connecting people with Jesus. There is *so much to celebrate!* When we look back, we *marvel* at how far God has already brought us—but then, you look forward at that horizon, *and it's like we're just getting started!* How much more does God have for us, church? How many souls are out there who *have yet* to be connected with Jesus and the new life He offers? How many places in our community are still waiting for someone to *just show up* out there with the light of Jesus? How many young people will grow up in our midst to become the servant-leaders, pastors, disciple-makers, kingdom builders of tomorrow? How many more *obstacles* will we face only to discover they're just *opportunities* for God to bring more miracles? *How much more does God have for us?* If He can do *immeasurably more than we could even ask or imagine*, where's the limit? *As long as we stay with Him, the adventure just keeps going!*
- **Emily:** We get amazed every time we see God move, but we really shouldn't be surprised, *because this is who God is!* Ps. 77, which we started with, continues, ***"Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the***

God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.”

(13-14) All these miracle stories, all these adventures yet to come. *This is what God does, because this is who God is!*

- **What's Next?**

- **Emily:** So, what do you think, Connection Church?
- **Alan:** What are the miracle stories you're meditating on from our 25 years of adventures?
- **Kari:** What do you think is next? If God has led us through this much already, **can you imagine the immeasurably more He has planned for the future?**
- **David:** Are we ready to *follow Him* into the next Great Adventure? One thing I know we're going to need to be ready—we're going to need *prayer*, so let's pray!
 - **David:** (...one-sentence prayer...)
 - **Kari:** (...one-sentence prayer...)
 - **Alan:** (...one-sentence prayer...)
 - **Emily:** (...one-sentence prayer...) Amen!