

Sunday, March 29, 2026

FAMILY BUSINESS MEETING

Dear Word-ites,

Grace and peace be multiplied to you and your families. As I write this report — I am doing something I do not always do well enough: I am slowing down long enough to truly feel the weight and the wonder of what God has done through this congregation. For those newer to this family, this report is a tradition I began in 2002, rooted in my conviction that an informed congregation is an empowered congregation. I write it as your pastor, yes — but I also write it as someone who loves you, who is grateful for you, and who carries this ministry in the deepest part of who I am.

Before anything else, I need to say: thank you. To our staff — the engine behind everything you see. To our leaders — the arms and legs of "Everyone Thriving." And to this congregation — twenty-one years of showing up, giving sacrificially, and trusting my leadership. I do not take a single Sunday or Tuesday of that trust lightly.

Twenty-one years. What excites me most when I think about this journey is not the buildings or the budgets — it is the people. It is 5,516 people who joined this ministry. It is 2,700 baptisms. It is more than 13,000 individuals who believed enough to give financially — to something that did not yet exist when they first walked through our doors. The numerical and spiritual growth of this congregation is the most encouraging evidence I have that God has been at work here in ways that go far beyond anything I personally planned or produced. What concerns me is that we will not live up to our full potential. I grieve the thought of a congregation this gifted, this resourced, and this positioned settling into comfort when the assignment is still unfinished. It grieves me when I see the temptation among God's people to slow down the moment things are going well, to take for granted the growth that cost so many so much, to lose the drive that carried us from nothing to something. We are close enough to our own growth that we can easily stop perceiving what God is still doing. Proximity can breed familiarity. And familiarity, left unchecked, breeds complacency. That is the thing I refuse to allow if I can help it.

I am clearer and more focused today than at any point in 21 years of ministry. The next five years of Word Tabernacle will surpass the first twenty-one — not because of talent, but because we have built on a foundation that does not move, and we are just now beginning to understand the full weight of what God placed on this ground.

WHO WE ARE — OUR IDENTITY AT 21**VISION:** Everyone Thriving**MISSION:** People Empowering People and Communities in Every Area of Life to the Glory of God**CORE VALUES:** Authority • Accountability • Community • Equity • Generosity • Quality • Unity**CAMPUSES:** Impact Center (16 acres, 125,000 sq. ft.) • Impact Pointe (66 acres, 28,000 sq.ft.) • Tarboro Campus (6 acres, 6,500 sq.ft.) • E-City (Digital)

21 YEARS • 3,300+ MEMBERS • 2,300+ BAPTISMS • 88 ACRES • 4 CAMPUSES

We are a seven-generation congregation. We built this ministry on land and buildings no bank would finance except Mechanics and Farmers Bank, a Black-owned institution. As we reflect on the data know they are a 21-year record of God's faithfulness — and the foundation under every word of this report.

CONTEXT EVERY MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

One of the most important things I can do as your pastor is make sure you are informed. An informed member prays more specifically, gives more strategically, and serves more intentionally. Before we get into our own report, consider the landscape every church is navigating right now:

- 85% of American churches are plateaued or in decline.
- Approximately 4,000 churches close every year in the United States.
- Only 15% of churches are growing — just 2% by reaching new people for Christ.
- Average church attendance has dropped from 40% of Americans in 2000 to roughly 20% today.
- The average American church has 65 members. Word Tabernacle has 3,000+.

Word Tabernacle is not in the 85%. But we must be vigilant to stay out of it.

Research from the Barna Group and the Hartford Institute identifies five primary reasons churches fail or decline: loss of mission clarity when programs replace purpose; overdependence on one personality rather than a God-given vision; governance failure when leadership operates without accountability or succession structure; financial fragility when there are no reserves and no revenue diversification; and failure to contextualize — speaking the language of 1985 to a congregation living in 2026. We take all five seriously. At Word Tabernacle, we review this list not because we are afraid, but because wise builders study the conditions that cause foundations to crack before their own foundation is tested. We are building for a century, not a season.

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURE

The most significant organizational decision of 2025 was our church restructure — not a response to crisis, but a response to capacity. God's blessing had outgrown our organizational container. Like Jethro's counsel to Moses in Exodus 18, it was time to build systems that could carry the weight of God's provision without breaking.

Word Tabernacle will begin to operate under a unified Council of Elders serving as our spiritual and fiduciary governing body, merging the former Board of Directors and Board of Elders into one accountable structure. Each Elder will be biblically qualified, spiritually mature, and organizationally accountable — providing vision, oversight, instruction, and protection. The Office of Senior Pastor provides strategic vision, community impact leadership, civic engagement, and succession coordination.

Eight specialized departments now execute our mission with focused excellence: Early Education & Formation, Personal Development & Discipleship, Community Transformation & Outreach, Membership Care & Wellness, Performing Arts & Production, Campus Management & Services, Fiscal Services & Compliance, and Digital Discipleship & AI. This structure eliminates redundancy, builds accountability, and creates a self-reinforcing system where every component makes the others stronger. We are building an institution that will outlast any single individual, including the one writing this report.

1. FAITH — GROWING SPIRITUALLY

Faith formation is our primary purpose. Every campus, initiative, and dollar exists to make disciples.

Come to Bible Study

What we do on Tuesday is not optional content for serious Christians. It is the primary vehicle through which this congregation is formed, shaped, and equipped for everything else we are asking it to do. Sunday worship ignites. Bible Study sustains. Worship stirs the heart. The Word of God renews the mind. Both are necessary. But the members who are in Bible Study consistently are not the same as the members who are not. They pray differently. They give differently. They serve differently. They handle adversity differently. The Word of God, rightly handled and consistently received, produces a quality of disciple that no amount of Sunday attendance alone can manufacture.

I am grateful for the attendance we are already seeing. We have built a Bible Study culture at Word Tabernacle that many churches would envy. To see the numbers that show up week after week, across life stages and schedules, is evidence of spiritual hunger in this congregation that I do not take for granted.

But I want more. I know the distance between our Sunday attendance and our Tuesday engagement, and I am not satisfied with that gap. There is no good reason — not schedule, not distance, not fatigue — that should permanently keep a member of this congregation away from the Word of God being taught systematically, practically, and with pastoral investment every week.

What we are building week by week is a congregation that cannot be easily shaken, misled, or discouraged — because they know what they believe and why they believe it.

If you have not been coming, start Tuesday. If you have been coming sporadically, commit to consistency for the next 90 days and watch what God does in your life. If you are already there faithfully — thank you, and bring someone with you.

Worship Arts — Where the Presence of God Is Released

Worship has been one of the most spiritually significant and, at times, most challenging areas of our ministry. We have experienced staff transitions in our Worship Arts department more than once — and each transition, while often necessary, disrupted continuity, affected our sound, and created seasons where we were rebuilding more than we were advancing. I am thankful to those who continued showing up because they love God and they love this church. They are the reason worship never stopped. They are the reason the presence of God kept showing up even when the infrastructure was unsteady. I am deeply grateful for every one of them. We are in a new season now — one where I believe with genuine conviction that the best worship Word Tabernacle Church has ever offered is still ahead of us. We have talent in this house that has not yet been fully developed or deployed. We have singers who should be recording. We have musicians who have the skill and the creativity to produce music that belongs not just in our sanctuary but in sanctuaries across this region and beyond. We have the infrastructure, the studios, and the organizational foundation to build a Worship Arts ministry that does not just execute a service but shapes what Spirit-led, culturally rooted, congregationally grounded worship looks like in the local church.

That is the vision. And the announcement of our new original welcome song — crafted specifically for this congregation, our community, and our calling — is the first declaration of that vision becoming reality. This song was not downloaded. It was not borrowed. It was written for us. When you hear it, I believe you will feel in it everything we have been and everything we are becoming. And it will be only the beginning of what this worship ministry produces when it is fully resourced and fully released.

The Thrive Institute

The WTC Thrive Institute is an online knowledge repository offering accessible, self-paced courses that combine sound biblical teaching with real-life application. It is a platform, not a program — equipping believers to grow in every area of life and impact their communities. I hope every member will visit thriveinstitute.us to tap into this resource.

Small Groups, Serve at Word & Discipleship

The research on church growth is clear: congregations where 60% or more of members participate in small groups consistently outgrow those that do not. Connection to community is not optional for discipleship — it is the vehicle. Our Thrive Groups exist to ensure that no one at Word Tabernacle walks their faith journey alone. Our goal is a church where most members are connected not because we told them to, but because they cannot imagine growing without community.

Alongside small groups, we are launching Serve at Word — a mobilization initiative built on a simple but convicting truth: in most churches, 20% of the people end up doing 80% of the work. We intend to change that. God has uniquely equipped every member with spiritual and natural gifts for divine assignments in the church and community. Serve at Word will lead every believer through gift discovery, development, and deployment. When more people serve, the load is shared. When the load is shared, the ministry expands. When the ministry expands, more people are reached. We need every gift in this house — including yours.

Those Who Have Left

We have a back door, and people walk through it. People leave for three primary reasons. Death — and we grieve every member we have lost on this side of eternity. Offense — someone was hurt, something went wrong in a moment of care or conflict, and a family decided they could not stay. And accountability — some people leave when discipleship gets too close to where they actually live, when membership means something is expected of them. I will not lower the standard to keep the crowd. Love without accountability is not love.

I am asking you — the members reading these words — to be the bridge. If you know someone who used to be here and has drifted, reach out to them. Not to argue or guilt them, but to let them know they have not been forgotten and that this family still has a place for them.

And as their former pastor, I am going to make one final personal touch before we archive their member files. Not for numbers — but because I made a covenant before God to shepherd the people entrusted to this ministry.

Men, Millennials, Gen X & Every Generation

One of my great passions for this next season is reaching those most underrepresented in the average church pew: men, Millennials, and Generation X. These are fathers, community leaders, and city shapers who often find themselves at the margins of institutional religion. Our programming, preaching, and culture must be genuinely hospitable to the 28-year-old with questions, the 45-year-old who is skeptical, and the 55-year-old quietly wrestling. Every generation deserves to see themselves in this ministry. We are building for all of them — intentionally.

2. FAMILY — STRENGTHENING OUR HOMES

A healthy church is made of healthy households. We cannot have a thriving church filled with struggling families.

Impact Academy — Expanding to Third Grade

The Impact Academy is expanding up to the Third Grade beginning in the 2027-2028 academic year — a significant milestone in our commitment to educational equity. In a region where early educational disadvantage is well documented, every classroom we add is a declaration that all children matter. We are raising children who know their worth, know their God, and know their potential before the world has a chance to say otherwise.

Care & Wellness

Our Office of Member Care & Wellness provides whole-person support from a member's first visit to their deepest valley — marriage counseling, pre-marital support, grief services, mental health intervention, and member care districts. We show up in hospital rooms, living rooms, and courtrooms. Please be sure to make us aware of the events in your life. As I have often said the one thing we are not good at is reading minds.

3. FITNESS — BODY, MIND & CAMPUS WELLNESS

Fitness at Word Tabernacle means the holistic thriving of every dimension of a person.

Faith in Motion & Impact Pointe Wellness Campus

Our Faith in Motion Fitness & Wellness Initiative kicked off at Impact Pointe. Coaches are leading and motivating a variety of fitness activities through spring and summer — encouraging every member to pursue physical health as an act of stewardship and worship. This initiative runs alongside the broader development of our 66-acre Impact Pointe campus into a shared-use community wellness destination featuring athletic fields, walking trails, and recreational facilities. Clearing of 20 acres is already underway with an additional 20 acres of trees being cut down. Eastern North Carolina has among the highest rates of preventable chronic disease in the state. These initiatives is one answer.

The Assembly, Impact Pointe Cemetery & The Impact Center

The Assembly — an 8,500 sq. ft. luxury event space on the Impact Pointe campus — is available for gatherings, retreats, fundraisers, and corporate experiences. Now under management by Word Tabernacle, this luxury property will return to Word Tabernacle ownership in 2027. The campus also houses our cemetery, maintained with dignity as we develop the surrounding grounds. At our 125,000 sq. ft. Impact Center on 16 acres, our commissary kitchen development continues following our 2025 restaurant license — creating a commercial kitchen incubator for food entrepreneurs, catering, and community-facing food programs. Our Tarboro Campus (6 acres) is leased to a church plant, and we maintain active ministry connection with that community.

4. FINANCES — FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

"Providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." — 2 Corinthians 8:21

In addition to member and partner giving, we are building diversified revenue streams — venue and event revenue from The Assembly, the commissary kitchen, Impact Center co-working and venue rentals, and our cemetery.

dFree — our financial freedom program — is designed to help individuals and families break free from debt, develop healthier financial habits, and move toward lasting stability. Through practical teaching, support, and accountability, participants learn to budget wisely, manage money with confidence, and build a stronger future. The financial health of this church is directly connected to the financial health of its members. A family moving toward economic freedom is a family positioned to give generously, serve sacrificially, and invest in something beyond themselves. dFree is not just a financial program — it is a discipleship pathway.

Key Growth Metrics

METRIC	INDUSTRY BENCHMARK	WTC TARGET
Weekly attendance growth	3-5% annually	5% annually
Small group participation	60%+ of active members	Building toward 60% by 2028
Volunteer engagement	1 per 56 active attenders	Grow via Serve at Word
Tithing households	25-30% of active members	75% of active members
Cash reserves	90+ days operating cash	96 days current; 120 days by 2027
Non-giving revenue	10-30% of total revenue	Building toward 30%

The Word Tabernacle Foundation — Building for Perpetuity

It is still my goal to establish the Word Tabernacle Church Foundation- a formal foundation funded by an endowment — a permanently invested pool of resources designed to ensure that the mission of this church continues in perpetuity, regardless of any single person, season, or economic climate. This is not a fund for today's expenses. This is a legacy vehicle for tomorrow's mission.

Endowment funds are how universities continue funding scholarships a century after their founders are gone. They are how hospitals keep healing communities long after their benefactors have passed. They are how great missions organizations outlasted their founders. Once formed we will invite members to consider a legacy gift through wills, trusts, life insurance designations, and planned contributions. More details will follow. This is how we build for a century.

5. FIELD — OUTREACH, MISSIONS & COMMUNITY IMPACT

We operate from seven Areas of Engagement: Educational Attainment, Housing & Homelessness, Social Justice, Food Insecurity, Health Disparities, Glocal Witness, and Economic Equity. These are not line items on a budget — they are our prophetic response to the world as it is, in service of the world as God intends it to be.

Evangelism

One of the convictions I carry most deeply as your pastor is this: a church that is not actively reaching people who do not know Jesus is, by definition, a church that is shrinking — regardless of how large the current attendance appears. Growth without evangelism is not growth at all. It is redistribution. We are moving saints from one address to another, and calling it a harvest.

Word Tabernacle Church is called to be something more than a well-organized congregation of the already-converted. We are called to be a sent people — a community of believers who carry the gospel beyond our walls into the workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, and relationships where people are living without it.

That is why I am asking every staff member, every leader, and every member of this congregation to embrace the BLESS and FRANCES models of evangelism as a personal practice and a community commitment.

What I am asking for is a cultural shift. I want Word Tabernacle to become a congregation where every member can name at least one person they are actively praying for, intentionally befriending, and purposefully moving toward for the sake of the gospel. I want our baptism count to grow not because we are attracting the already-churched, but because we are reaching the genuinely lost. I want our community to know us not just as the big church on Word Plaza, but as the people who keep showing up — in their neighborhoods, at their events, around their tables — because they actually believe the gospel is the most important thing they could ever share.

Community Transformation

Our REACH program has come back inhouse as a ministry of the church providing tangible support for families navigating crisis: rent and utility assistance, food resources, and emergency intervention. Thrive Cities extends our community presence beyond our physical campuses into the neighborhoods where our members live, work, and raise their families. The COST Program — Creating Organizational Structures for Transformation — continues building nonprofit capacity across eastern North Carolina, because we believe the most effective way to address systemic challenges is to multiply organizations equipped to tackle them.

Our food security initiatives, monthly food distribution, and raised bed gardens are a direct response to the documented food insecurity in Nash and Edgecombe counties.

BLOC — Civic Engagement

Word Tabernacle is the founding home of BLOC — the Ballots and Legislative Organizing Coalition — a comprehensive civic engagement program building sustained political power through micro canvassing, precinct organizing, relational organizing, and social media. BLOC's goal is measurable: increase voter turnout

by 40-60% in target communities. The urgency is real: Senate District 11 saw votes drop from 209,774 in 2008 to only 112,519 in 2024. That gap represents disengaged citizens who deserve to be heard.

BLOC operates year-round through a Four Seasons model — training and relationship building in the spring, intensive voter contact in the summer, coalition building in the fall, and election execution and evaluation in the winter. Word Tabernacle serves as a founding Chapter, maintaining year-round voter registration, co-hosting Precinct Action Days and Community Action Days, and providing nonpartisan civic education. BLOC launches in Vance, Nash, and Franklin counties and scales to 1,000+ chapters across North Carolina by Year 3. The BLOC launch is Saturday, April 11, 2026, 8am here at the church. You can register in the Ministry One app.

Thrive List — Economic Equity Through Entrepreneurship

The Thrive List is our business support community empowering entrepreneurs with tools, training, relationships, and resources to build sustainable businesses rooted in faith and purpose. Launched in August 2025 during Black Business Month, the program has grown from 200 to 300+ registered business owners in six months.

Vendor fees are kept intentionally below market rate so early-stage entrepreneurs are never priced out. Revenue from events funds no-cost trainings, certifications, and workshops — removing financial barriers for those who need access most. This is not just impacting businesses. It is touching families, building confidence, creating access, and strengthening community — using entrepreneurship as a tool for ministry, stewardship, and transformation.

Prison Ministry, Reentry & Global Witness

We are expanding our prison and reentry ministry — building deeper relationships with correctional facilities, increasing in-facility ministry events, and creating robust reentry support for returning citizens including employment connections, housing resources, and integration pathways into our congregation.

We are also actively developing ministry support for our growing immigrant community — brothers and sisters from Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, and Spanish-speaking migrant farming families throughout our region. These are not guests at the edges of our congregation. They are members of this family, bringing language, culture, faith, and gifts that make us more fully the Body of Christ. In the weeks and months ahead, we will be building intentional programming, translation resources, and community connection pathways to ensure that every person who walks through our doors finds a home here.

6. FUTURE — SUCCESSION, SAFETY & MY PRIORITIES

Pastoral Succession

Let me speak plainly about something most churches refuse to address until it is too late. Every church that outlasts its founder does so because someone had the courage to plan for a tomorrow they may not personally lead. Moses prepared Joshua. Elijah prepared Elisha. Paul invested in Timothy. Succession is not morbid conversation — it is mature, faithful leadership.

I am 26 years into pastoral ministry. I am healthy, called, and not going anywhere soon. But I serve a God who plans in decades, and I serve a congregation that deserves to be protected. Our succession planning process

is active, formalized, and embedded in our Council of Elders governance structure. The research is sobering: churches that navigate pastoral transition well started planning while the founding pastor was at full strength. The churches that collapse waited for a crisis. We are not waiting. By 2030, Word Tabernacle will have an identified, trained, and congregation-vetted successor ready for leadership continuity. This process will be communicated transparently at every stage. You will not be surprised. You will be prepared.

Campus Safety — Metal Detector Installation

This is a topic I wish I did not have to address. Between 2018 and 2024, over 400 documented incidents of violence occurred at American religious institutions. The FBI consistently identifies houses of worship among the top targeted locations in the country. The mass shootings at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston and congregations across the South are not distant tragedies — they are warnings every church leader is obligated to take seriously. Beginning this year, Word Tabernacle Church will install walk-through metal detectors at primary entrances to our worship spaces. This decision was made after thorough consultation with law enforcement professionals, security experts, and peer congregations. Our Stronghold Keepers ministry will be trained on protocols that are effective and welcoming. We will be safety-conscious without being fear-driven. We will be vigilant without being hostile. This is an act of love for this congregation. Nothing less. Nothing more.

My Personal Priorities for the Next Five Years

I want to close this report by sharing something personal. For over 26 years, I have worked hard. Hard does not begin to cover it. I worked hard to build this ministry. I worked hard to provide my children with education, college opportunities, activities, experiences, and every resource I could access. I am proud of the adults my children have become, and I am grateful that our relationships are strong and genuine. But I was always working. Always working. And I have come to understand that some of the most important moments in a family's life do not announce themselves in advance — they just happen, in ordinary time, when you are present and unhurried. There are some of those moments I did not give my full self to, and I want to do better. So, my priorities for the next five years are, in this order: my family, Word Tabernacle Church, my campaign for NC Senate, and book writing. I recently resigned from the Board of Trustees of Elizabeth City State University and taken a leave of absence from the Executive Board of the Chamber of Commerce — two organizations I believe in deeply and have been honored to serve. But I am committed to stewarding my time and energy toward the assignments where I can go deepest. Spread thin is not the same as deeply invested. I am choosing depth. And this congregation will be the direct beneficiary of a pastor who is more present, more focused, and more at peace than he has ever been. I am also making a commitment that is long overdue: I am going to take intentional care of my own emotional and physical health. Twenty-six years of pastoral ministry at the pace I have kept takes a toll that does not always show up immediately — but it shows up. A pastor who does not tend to himself cannot fully tend to others, and I have learned that lesson more personally than I would like to admit. For the first time in my pastoral ministry, I will be out of the pulpit 6 to 8 Sundays per year — intentionally, not reactively. Not because of illness or emergency, but because rest is not a reward for finishing the work. It is a requirement for sustaining it. You are in good hands on those Sundays. The team we have built is more than capable. And the pastor who returns from genuine rest will serve you better than the one running on empty ever could.

A FINAL WORD

Twenty-six years of pastoring. Twenty-one years here in Rocky Mount. I didn't know when this started what it would become. The day I withdrew funds from my 401(k) to buy the church a Hammond Organ and Leslie speaker and to sustain myself and family until the church could compensate me, I didn't really know if it would become anything. I didn't know we would baptize 2,700 souls, or that more than 13,000 people would invest over \$56 million into a vision that, in those early days, none of us could fully see. I did not know that I would be elected to serve in the North Carolina General Assembly — that God would place a pastor from Rocky Mount in a legislative seat.

But I also did not know how hard it would be. I did not know that I would stand at gravesites in our own Impact Pointe Cemetery and say goodbye to my son. To my father. To my mother. There is something that words cannot fully reach about burying the people you love most on the same ground where you are building the thing God called you to build. I did not know about the criticism. I was not prepared for the reality that leading people — genuinely loving people, giving your life to people — does not protect you from being misunderstood, misrepresented, or maligned by some of those same people. I did not know that we would navigate a global pandemic and come out stronger, or that 88 acres in eastern North Carolina would become the addresses to one of the most comprehensive faith-based ministry ecosystems in this region. What I knew then is the same thing I know now: God was in it. God is still in it. And the fact that we are standing here — together, still thriving — is not an accident. But, you showed up like you knew. You gave when it cost you something. You served when you were tired. You stayed when others left. You prayed when the vision was not yet visible. You trusted my leadership — and I will spend the rest of my pastoral ministry being worthy of that trust.

Now hear me as plainly as I can say it: we cannot grow comfortable. Do not let proximity to the blessing make you forget the price of the blessing. The temptation to slow down is real. The temptation to assume growth will continue on its own momentum is dangerous. We are close enough to what God has done here that we can take it for granted — and that is the one thing I am asking you not to do. The Impact Pointe campus, the Foundation, the Worship & Arts ministries, the expanded Impact Academy, the Thrive List, BLOC, Serve at Word, Dfree, Faith in Motion, our prison and reentry ministry, and every other ministry are not programs to admire from a distance. They are assignments that need your gifts, your generosity, and your full engagement. I love you. I believe in you. I need you. Not just the version of you that shows up when it is convenient — but the version of you that God created and this moment demands. We are not a church looking backward at its greatest days. We are a church that has not yet seen our greatest days.

Until All Thrive

Pastor G

