

2018-11-4 Growing

Growing

November 4, 2018

Pastor Scott Austin

artisanchurch.com

[Music Intro]

[Male voice] The following is a presentation of Artisan Church in Rochester, New York.

[Voice of Pastor Scott]

Well, let's dive right in. Today we are kicking off a short series. It's going to be 3 weeks long in which we revisit our fundraising campaign from last fall, which was called "Growing in Faith Together." Now if you were with us at this time last year you'll remember that we are raising money to expand and improve our building, specifically to make more room for more and better children's ministry and to make the building more accessible and more inclusive. Now the campaign last fall was pretty successful. We received enough in the upfront one-time gifts and pledges of recurring gifts to know that we'd be able to go forward with the project. And we are actually just a few short months away from breaking ground on that project. We are going to get moving on it as soon as we all thaw out after the winter, which I know seems like it's going to be years and that's how winter is in Rochester, but I promise it's actually only a few months from now. And we're going forward with it, it's going to work, and we're excited about it. But we would love to push it over the top and be able to complete the whole project without adding a single dollar to our long term mortgage debt. That's the big goal that we have right now—it's to get us from the the place of "We can do this" to the place of "We can do this without taking on any additional long term debt."

And so, we are doing this little 2.0 version of the "Growing in Faith Together" concept for a few reasons. One reason is that we know that a lot of you who have made Artisan in your spiritual home in the last year or so weren't here for the first version of this "Growing in Faith Together" campaign, and also because a lot of you who were here then might not have been in a place at that time where you could be part of this, and maybe now you are. Maybe something has changed in your life that's enabled you to do that now when you couldn't before. Or maybe your connection to the community has grown deeper and you might feel moved to be part of it when you didn't last time. So "Growing in Faith Together 2.0." As I said, it's three short weeks and here's how it's going to go. Today we're going to talk about growing, the message of today's sermon is simply "Growing." Specifically we're going to talk about how our kids are growing up and how we should be thinking now about the day when the children of Artisan

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become the young adults of Artisan. When they become members of the church, when they become ministry team leaders. When they are active and serving in leadership. It may not seem like it but before we know it, we're going to look up and a lot of the kids who are in the room right here today or in the room down there today are going to be old enough to be taking the reins of Artisan Church, and we want to get ready for that sooner rather than later. That's this week.

Next week we're going to talk about "Welcoming," which is the idea of how we can make our building reflect the posture that's in our hearts. Let me say what I mean. We're going to talk about how we make the physical structure of our building and the surrounding grounds reflect what's in our hearts, which is a posture of wanting it to be accessible to everybody and inclusive of everybody. Here's the thing that's true. You can feel like that all day long and unless you do something about it, it's not really much good to anybody. So we could really wish that people could get in the building without having to push the door open, but until we put the money into the constructing the thing that they can push the button and the door opens, it doesn't really matter what we feel or how good it might feel to want to be accessible. The same goes for all kinds of other things, from bathrooms to lots of different types of access. So that's the thing we're going to talk about next week, which is being welcoming in our building. Then in the final week, the title of the sermon is "Together" because two things. First, I think we will be enriched—all of us—by experiencing the broader diversity that these improvements and expansions will accommodate. It's not just for the people who need it, it's for the people who need those people. That's the first meaning of "Together," and of course the second meaning of "Together" is that this really won't happen, we won't get over this second big hump unless we all do it together, growing in faith together.

Now I'm going to make a few disclaimers and promises to you before I go any further on this. The first one is this. I want you to know that I am very sympathetic to the people in the room who heard the words "capital campaign" and their first reaction was to cringe and their second reaction was to think, "Where's the nearest emergency exit because I need to find it and get out of here!" You don't have to do a show of hands on that [laughter] but I know there's people in the room who feel that way. Real talk, my friends, I kind of feel that way too. I've seen the things that you've seen. I've seen the churches that have been kind of corrupted by the need for constant fundraising. I have seen the TV preachers who have convinced themselves, and lots of other people apparently, that their private jet is a very important part of their job to spread the gospel in the world. All of this kind of abuse of finance and money, I've seen it in the church and I know that you've seen it too. And if that is part of what you're worried about, I want you to know that I'm sympathetic to that and that I see you out there. I don't know which ones of you it is, but you know what I mean. I'm there with you and yet I believe in this project

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wholeheartedly. I would not be standing up here doing this if that weren't the case, I promise you. I would have found a way to take a vacation instead. Because I really don't have it in me to try to sell something I don't believe in. I believe in this project because I believe in this place and this community and the work that God is doing, and that I believe God wants to do through it. And I believe in the process that we developed for this project, I believe it's appropriately modest and reasonable and it's within reach with this effort that we will make together.

Okay, so the second little thing is this. It's not a little thing, it's actually a very big thing. But here's my promise to you. I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure that this series and the fundraising that surrounds it will not cause us to take our focus off our actual purpose when we're here together on Sundays, which is to worship God in community with each other. Encounter God, embrace people, engage culture in the way of Jesus. That's what we do when we're here every Sunday. It's what we were here to do last week, it's what we're here to do this week, it's what we're going to be here to do throughout this three week series and in the future. That's what we are here to do at Artisan Church. And so, whatever we do during this campaign, it's not going to take our focus off of that. If it does, I really do want you to tell me because it means I'm missing something and I wouldn't want that to be the case. So we're going to be gathered by the spirit, we're going to hear the word read and proclaimed. We're going to celebrate new life in Christ at the table that he prepares and we're going to be sent forth into the world to share his love and peace and grace with those we come in contact with. So this is my sincere hope, that if you don't have a single dime to spare to give to the "Growing in Faith Together" campaign or if you're visiting from out of state and you're never going to be here again (this is your one chance to be at Artisan and you walked right into the capital campaign buzzsaw) my sincere hope is that if you're in that boat or one that's like it, that this experience today, the sermon, whatever happens in the next few weeks, will be meaningful and enriching to you just the same way I would want that to happen on any week of the year, no matter what our topic was. And then the last thing, the last promise is that we will have some fun. At least I hope.

So I feel like I need to pray for myself that all that I just said will actually be true and for all of us. Would you join me in just a word of prayer before we get moving on the topic? God, may it be the case that we are here together worshipping you and that this topic wouldn't be a distraction from that but in fact would actually point us into that in a way that's real and meaningful for us. We pray for your provision, that this campaign would be successful and we would fund this project and it would not prevent us from doing the kinds of ministry we believe you've called us to do. And I pray for those who are particularly pained and troubled by the mention of fundraising in church somewhat, myself included, that you be with us and help

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us to be open to what you have for us in this experience. We pray all these things in Christ's name, Amen.

So there's a story in the Old Testament about how the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. How many are familiar with the idea that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years? Okay, almost everybody knows at least that that story happened in some way even if you don't know any of the details or why. But what a lot of people don't know even if they know that part is that it didn't have to happen that way. It wasn't supposed to happen that way. When God raised up Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt into the promised land, it was not part of the plan that they would wander for 40 years. Who would have signed up for that in the first place, right? What happened was they got out of slavery Egypt and they crossed over that sea and God's miraculous provision got them there. And it's not a very far journey from Egypt to the promised land, you know. Think of Israel, Palestine, Jerusalem — not that far. They went straight there and they got right up to the edge of it and then what happened is that they lost their nerve. They didn't believe that God would actually deliver this land into their possession. Now the subtext here, which I'm not going to address but I want you to know that I'm aware of, is that there's this kind of inherent violence in this experience in the first place which can be troubling to some of us. I recognize that, I do talk about that from time to time and I will again so if that's distracting you, I hope that you can kind of hang that hat up on a hook and we'll get back to it. But here's the thing, they sent in 12 spies into the promised land, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and 2 of the spies came back, Caleb and Joshua, and said, "You would not believe the size of the grapes! We have to go now, this land is amazing. The Lord will provide!" And then 10 of the spies came back and said, "You will not believe the size of those people. We can't conquer them. We can't do this, I think maybe we should not try." So the people decided, unfortunately, not to trust in God's provision to get them into this promised land. In other words, they didn't believe that God's promise was going to be a reality. And so because of their lack of trust in God, their punishment was that none of them would get to enter the land ever — well, none of the adults anyway — because anybody who was over 20 was told, "You will be able to get in," but anyone who was under 20 knew that they would eventually find their way in, or could. So I want to take a moment to look in the Scriptures at the events of this pronouncement of judgment, that the people have demonstrated their faithlessness and God pronounces the judgment that they won't be able to go into the promised land. It's in the Book of Numbers Chapter 14. In the red Bibles if you turn to page 116 you'll find it. If you use the Artisan Church app Bible app you can just search numbers 14:26 and it will come right up, or you can bring your own Bible. Now I'm going to give you a warning because this gets a little bit morbid. This passage of Scripture gets a little bit

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dark, but hang with me here and I think there's an important message for us in this. Numbers 14:26 through 33:

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, “How long shall this wicked congregation complain against me? I have heard the complaints of the Israelites which they complain against me. Say to them, ‘As I live, says the Lord, I will do to you the very things I heard you say. Your dead bodies shall fall in this very wilderness, and of all your number included in the census from 20 years old and upward who have complained against me, not one of you shall come into the land in which I swore to settle you except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. But your little ones who you said would become booty, who would be the plunders of war, you said, I will bring them in. And they shall know the land that you have despised. But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness and your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness for 40 years and shall suffer for your faithlessness until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness.’”

Now what God is saying is referring to something they had said, right? “We can't go try to take this place or we're going to lie and wind up dead in this wilderness.” In other words, “The people are going to kill us.” And so God says to them, “Well, yeah that is what's going to happen to you, but not the way you think.” And I was thinking about this story a lot this week and I kept coming back to this one confusing question. Which is, once this pronouncement was made, once Moses said on behalf of the Lord, “Any of you who are 20 years old or older are not going to see the promised land before you die,” why is it that they kept at it? There was no reward for them in their future. Why would they then stick together, stick to the plan and wander around in the wilderness for 4 decades when there was nothing that they would reap as a reward? I couldn't figure it out. And then it occurred to me, they did for their children. They kept going, not because they had a reward that they would get to see, but because they knew if they did their children would get that reward. And that's pretty powerful. See, it's even more than that. It's not just that the kids would get the reward. It's that the kids became the leaders in this situation. Did you catch the language in there? It says, “Your children shall be shepherds. In other words, your children will lead you around...until you fall down dead in the wilderness [laughter] and *then* they will go into the Land of Promise. The children are the shepherds all of a sudden in this story.

So let's talk about this and what it means for us. It's never a one to one comparison when you look at an old Bible story and try to apply it to yourself or to your community. But there's value in thinking through how it might be analogous, so I want to ask you what promised land do you hope for in Artisan's future? Maybe for you Artisan has been a sanctuary in a time of spiritual pain. I know that's true for lots of people, I hear that all the time. When you've moved

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through that, who will be in need of it after you? Who's the person out there somewhere who's going to find shelter and sanctuary in their experience of spiritual pain 10 years from now? Do you know that some of our kids will be the ones to welcome those people into our safe sanctuary, into our congregation of shelter? Our kids are going to be standing at the door when they walk in. Maybe for you, Artisan is the place where you finally began to embody your faith. You believed it in your head and in your heart for your whole life, you've spoken the words with your mouth your whole life or for part of your life but you've never actually put the boots on the ground and started to do the work that's required of people who are following Jesus. You've never actually, until you came here, done outward acts of service and compassion and justice and now you're at Artisan and you're finding that that's something that you're drawn to and it's important to you and meaningful to you, what new ministries, what new opportunities for that kind of embodied faith will help somebody else find that real expression for the first time in their lives. In the year, say 2025, whatever that ministry is I bet it will be started by one of the children of Artisan Church.

Maybe your dream is for something that's actually missing at Artisan and you are one of those people who says, "I love this church, I just wish it had _____. I just wish it was more ____." And maybe that dream will come true for you. Maybe you're a Holy Spirit kind of person and you want just a little bit more Pentecost in the in the worship services. Maybe you are passionate about evangelism and you say, "You know, these guys are good at spiritual formation in some ways but they're not so good at bringing new people to Christ out of nowhere," and you want to see a flood of people receiving Jesus here at Artisan for the first time in their lives. Or maybe you are so committed to the ideals of a church that reflects the kingdom of God in all of its diversity and glory and you would like to see Artisan become a place that is more ethnically and racially diverse, or diverse in other ways that it's not yet. Whatever those dreams might be, I have to tell you it's likely that our kids are going to be the ones to make some of them happen. And so what I want to ask you is, would you continue and persist the way the Israelites did in the wilderness in working toward those dreams that you have for your community of faith, even if you knew that some of them might not be achieved while you're still here. Would it matter to you enough to do that? You don't know where you may be. God may call you to another city. God may call you home. Hopefully you won't your body won't lie down dead in the wilderness [laughter] (we hope that part of the analogy does not fit). But you don't know what the future holds for you, and yet, do you care about your community faith enough to work toward those dreams that you have for it even if you wouldn't be one of the ones to fulfill it? Because I'm telling you, some of it, you're not going to see it in your time here because it's going to be our kids who make it happen, not us.

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Our children are going to be leading us into the new lands that God has in store for us and what I want to do is turn this church over to them sooner rather than later. I want to turn this church over to them sooner than it feels comfortable to do so. Because, as with lots of important things, if you wait until it feels comfortable to do it then it's probably not happening. And you know happens to churches that don't turn their church over to their children? Well, our church is 14 years old. What's one generation...let's call it 30 or 40 years. And if we don't turn the church over to the children way before we get to that point, and I don't want to be overly institutionally morbid, but we are worshipping in a building that was built in 1985 by a congregation that had hopes and dreams. And they were wonderful people, but they did not turn the church over to their children and they're not here anymore.

So I want to turn it over to them. I want to empower them. I want them to be the saints that God wants them to be, but we are actually quite limited in the ways that we can serve them right now and prepare them for what that will be in their lives. If you are not a parent or a volunteer in the children's ministry, you might not know what it's like down there. And today is one of those late fall warm days where I think maybe some of our people are just out having fun, which, more power to them, but it's a light day down there right now so even if you were to walk down right now you might not see it. But I want to show you a little video that we made last year which kind of explains what's going on in that children's ministry space and why it's important that we do this. I'm going to ask to roll that video and we can all watch it together.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT ([view online](#) - closed captioning available):

Bridget S. (Mom of 2): My kids have developed a love for the Bible since coming here and they enjoy talking about God, or when they hear God mentioned somewhere they get excited about it.

Jessie B. (Pastor to Children and Families): In our children's ministry at Artisan we use a program called The Secret Circle with our kids. We spend time together creating a sacred space, we explore Bible stories, we wonder about them, we ask questions, we discuss. We put on plays and read stories and spend time exploring our faith together. We love our time together with the children, but the space that we have it is not ideal.

Bridget S: So when we pick up our kids, it's kind of like a traffic jam. It's a little crazy [laughs].

Jessie B: It's very difficult to get all the kids' attention and to move through the activities that we have planned. When there are kids that need a little bit of extra space, we don't have and to

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offer to them. Our crowded space also makes it difficult to accommodate kids with special needs.

Bridget S: You know, as much as I rely on this room, the sanctuary, to be a comfortable place for me, I think the kids need just as much of that for them in their own way.

Jessie B: I would love to have a children's ministry check in area, inviting rooms for the kids to be in. Space to have our Sacred Circle, space for kids who need to step away from the group and take a minute. Space for kids to be quiet and contemplative and pray. We are so glad that all of our families join us at Artisan, and we would love to have a room for your kids to engage with the Bible and run and play.

Bridget S: It's just so beautiful to me to see how our church really comes around our kids helps them grow and come all together as a family.

Jessie B: We're dreaming big about our building at Artisan and because we have big plans, we need your help. Please join us.

END OF VIDEO

Pastor Scott: All right, I love it. So let me quickly tell you what the ways are to respond to this. If you'd like to respond to it, if you're if you weren't part of it last time or for whatever reason weren't ready then and you want to do it now, there's two things you can do. You can either go to that web address which is at the end of the video www.artisangrowing.com or you can open the Artisan Church app and tap on the "Growing in Faith Together" thing. It's pretty big and hard to miss (we made it that way on purpose). Once you do that you'll find two options for how to proceed. One is to make a gift right there. You can do that on your phone using credit or debit card and it's very quick to do in the mobile app. Or on the website, if you're doing it at home on your computer, www.artisangrowing.com. The other thing is you can do is fill out a form which indicates your commitment to your pledge to give a certain amount over the next period of either two or three years. Now it's a three-year campaign that started a year ago, so you could do two years and catch up with everybody who was involved last year or you could do three years starting right now. Either one is okay. The one thing you do need to know is if you made a pledge or a gift last year and you need to change it, there's no way to do that right in the website. So just email our giving manager: giving@artisanchurch.com; it's Scott Cranfill who was right up here earlier, and we'll get it straightened out with how take care of that. So in the app or at www.artisangrowing.com. You can make your gift one time, or recurring, or both, or you can make your pledge about that. We would love to have everybody participate. I really would love to have 100 percent participation in this even if what you can do is, like, the Patreon

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thing, like, just a dollar a month. Whatever you can do to be part of this is important and meaningful to us, and the nice thing about being in community with each other is that nobody has to do all of the lifting.

Paul was pretty clear to the churches in the early church about how they should give. In 2 Corinthians he says, "Each of you must give as you've made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." I certainly don't want you to give reluctantly and I definitely don't want you to give because you feel like you're under compulsion. That's not what this is about at all, but if you are cheerful about this and feel excited about it, I do want you to give, and I want you to give generously and sacrificially. So this week's fun stuff is swag — stuff we all get (as Michael Scott reminds us). There's a few options here. We have the Artisan Church pint glasses. If you were here last year you'll remember these. If you're just seeing these for the first time, they are very nice. We have the amber bottles. These are great, they have a screw cap on them with the Artisan logo etched on them, and we have the field note style Artisan pocket notebooks with the nice embossed logo. These were printed locally by a great company. And here's the thing. Typically with these, we say if you will go and make a pledge, you can have one when you do that. If you go and make a one-time gift, you can have one when you do that. If you do both, you can have two. What I'm going to say to you right now is they're on a table right as you leave the sanctuary. Just take one if you plan to make a pledge or a gift, just take one with you. It will be a reminder for you. I trust you, and if you decide after you get home that you can't actually do the thing and you're sitting there looking at this really nice pint glass and go, "I better bring this back," don't worry about it, just keep it [laughter], okay? And if you're visiting with us today and you sat through the capital campaign message on your one time you will be at Artisan, you can definitely have a pint glass [laughter] because we're grateful to you and I'm grateful to each one of you. And next week we're going to spray paint the lawn, so don't miss that. All right, let's pray. I'm way over time, it's my fault.

Thank you God for this time together. We pray that this story from Scripture would be meaningful to us whether or not we are able or intending to give to this campaign. That we would be thinking about what it means to turn over our faith in our church to the next generation of people. We pray for the success of this campaign, that with the efforts of each of us, as we're inspired by your Holy Spirit, that this would do the things that we need to do so that we can continue to persist in ministry in the ways you've called us to without the extra obligations of debt over the long term. We pray for your provision, and for all the things we're excited about we trust you and look ahead to what will come. We pray these things in Christ's name, amen.

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Well, I'm going to invite you all to take communion now. The table of the Lord is to be offered for those who seek Him in this place, whether you're a member of Artisan Church, or of any church, or not. You can come and receive the body and the blood. May it be for you the real presence of Jesus the savior, may be an act of unity and food for your spiritually hungry souls. Come up through the middle aisles please, and you can take the bread in the wine or the juice right at the table and then make your way back to your seats through the outer aisles. And There will be a member of the prayer team at the back of the room who would be happy to pray with you right now if you want to receive prayer. Let's continue to worship God, amen.

[end of sermon]

[Male voice] For more information visit us at ArtisanChurch.com