

HERE *I Am*







**THEN I HEARD THE VOICE
OF THE LORD SAYING, “Whom
shall I send? And who will go
for us?”**

**AND I SAID,
“Here I am. Send me!”**

ISAIAH 6:8



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Hello Shepherd family,

God is up to something. We want to join Him in it. The Here I Am initiative is an opportunity for us to invest in the church we love and the people we haven't met yet. Just as those who came before us were generous so that we could worship, connect, and serve here today, it's now our turn to shape the church of today and tomorrow. Through this initiative, we'll reimagine our spaces, strengthen the impact of our mission partners, and grow in generosity, so more people can encounter the welcoming love of Jesus. I invite you to prayerfully consider what it might look like for you to say, "Lord, here I am. I'm available."

Grateful for you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary A. King".

LEAD PASTOR



SHEPHERD TIMELINE

1975

INITIAL VISION

Several families in the Lower St. Croix Valley feel the need for a new gospel-focused Lutheran church in the area. Delores Hansen and Merle Schoess collect 70 signatures in one week to demonstrate interest and secure approval from the synod office.

SUMMER 1977

FIRST PASTOR

The Call Committee unanimously recommends extending a call to Pastor Jon Olson. On August 14 Pastor Olson conducts his first worship service at Lakeland Village Hall.

JUNE 3, 1979

A FIRST HOME

The congregation marches from Lakeland Village Hall to its new church home in Lakeland, stopping for prayers with members of other local churches along the way.

1986

A NEW LEADER

Pastor Jon Olson resigns after nine years of leadership. The congregation extends a call to Pastor Steve Kramer, leading Shepherd into its next era of growth.

1998-2000

LET IT SHINE

A task force begins evaluating options to address persistent space constraints, resulting in a decision to relocate. The congregation approves a new facility in Afton and authorizes the Let It Shine capital appeal.

JUNE 30, 2002

A NEW HOME

Shepherd holds its first service at the new church in Afton. The building is completed and dedicated on September 8.

2005-2006

LET THE CHILDREN COME

Many new individuals and families are attracted to Shepherd in its new location. Plans to add 21,000 square feet for classrooms, gym, and offices are approved. Let The Children Come! campaign to raise funds for the addition begins.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2007

GRAND OPENING AND OPEN HOUSE

Work on the addition is completed and the church hosts an open house in the new space.

2017-2018

LEADERSHIP CHANGE

After more than 30 years of leading Shepherd, Pastor Steve Kramer announces his retirement. A call committee is formed and a nationwide search for his replacement begins. On December 2, 2018, the congregation votes to call Pastor Jeremy King as the third lead pastor of Shepherd of the Valley.

2019-2020

MASTER PLANNING BEGINS

A small team of staff and council members start a strategy and design process to guide the future of our building, which is then paused due to the pandemic.

2022-2023

LOVE GIVES NIGHT

Re-engagement begins with generosity coaching, leading to the start of an annual Love Gives Night to teach the importance of generosity as a discipleship practice.

2024

BUILDING ASSESSMENT

The church council approves the restart of master planning; an architectural company is added into the process.

2025

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Designs are developed, and a feasibility study shows there is capacity and opportunity for each generation to invest in the present and future of Shepherd.

2026

INITIATIVE APPROVED

The church council reviews and approves the Here I Am initiative.

WEEK 1

Sermon Notes

You're Invited Prayer helps center the Here I Am initiative on God's work in and through us. Join us for Sunday prayer gatherings **October 4 – November 8** after the **10:45** service with the Here I Am prayer team.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS : : : : :

ICEBREAKER

- Introduce yourself to the group, and share about a highlight of the fall so far.
- What's something you've done in your life that you felt unqualified for?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share something that stuck out to you about the message.
2. Read Isaiah 6:1-8. Put yourself in Isaiah's shoes. What would you be thinking or feeling if you were him?
3. What does Isaiah mean about unclean lips? In what ways are we prone to count ourselves out from being used by God?
4. What changes Isaiah's perspective to be able to say "here I am?" Do you think God wants to use us in a similar way? Why or why not?
5. Do you have availability in your life to be used by God? Why or why not? What are some common reasons people feel they can't or won't be used by God?
6. What is the balance between God's role and our responsibility when it comes to being used by God?
7. How might we know when God is calling us to something?

PRAYER PRACTICE

Set a timer for one to three minutes (whatever your group is comfortable with). Spend that time praying and telling God that you're available to be used by Him. Share afterward what that experience was like.

WEEK 1 DEVOTIONAL

"What I say is true and all the world should receive it. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners from their sin and I am the worst sinner. And yet God had loving-kindness for me. Jesus Christ used me to show how long He will wait for even the worst sinners. In that way, others will know they can have life that lasts forever also."

1 Timothy 1:15-16

If you were to take a poll of my friends in high school about my future, lead pastor and seminary president would have never made the list of possible vocations. I was painfully insecure and tried to fit in with any crowd that would have me. I hid my true self, and I presented whatever version of me I thought people wanted to see. I lived with the assumption that God couldn't use someone like me.

Paul, who is writing to Timothy in this verse, reminds us that God doesn't call people because they have it all together. Paul's response to God isn't confidence; it's confession. Standing in God's presence, he becomes deeply aware of his own brokenness and unworthiness. But the story doesn't end there. God removes Paul's guilt, atones for his sin, and reminds Paul that what qualifies him is not his own goodness, but God's grace.

The same is true for us. Because of Jesus, our sins have been forgiven and we have been made new. God has never waited for perfect people before inviting them into His mission. He simply looks for hearts that are willing to say, "Here I am."

Today, instead of focusing on all the reasons you think God couldn't use you, spend a few moments remembering what Jesus has already done for you. Let His grace become louder than the tapes that play in your mind and heart, and ask God to make you available for whatever He has in store.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Days 1-3

What thoughts or stories do you tell yourself that keep you from believing God could use you? Bring those to God in prayer, and thank Him that His grace is greater than your shortcomings. His power is made perfect in our weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Days 4-7

Where in your life has God already called you to say "Here I am," and where might God be calling you to say "Here I am" to a new place? Spend some time in prayer reflecting on those spaces and asking God to work through you in them. Ask Him for the courage to trust His strength more than your own abilities.

A HERE *I Am* STORY

NATHAN'S STORY

During this past Lent season, God gently invited me to step outside my comfort zone and join my first small group. At first, I wasn't sure God was talking to me, but he nudged me and I said yes. Looking back, I can see He had something special planned for me although I was dragging my feet and sometimes resisted.

Each week, I gathered with fellow Christians who were walking a faith journey much like my own. Together, we opened the Bible, explored God's word, and wrestled with questions about who God is and what He desires for our lives. We shared our struggles, doubts, and obstacles to growing in faith, discovering that we were not alone in our challenges.

What made the experience so meaningful was the authenticity of our conversations. They were real, uncensored, and sometimes emotional. People spoke honestly about their victories and failures, their fears and hopes, and the ways God was working in their lives. Through their stories, I

found encouragement, inspiration, and a deeper understanding of God's grace and love for us. I still have questions and doubts but know that through prayer and community, I can find a deeper understanding of who God is and how we fit in His creation.

As Lent came to an end, I started to imagine that God's invitation was really a gift, a new door to open toward a more fulfilling life. He used this small group to strengthen my faith, challenge me to grow, and remind me that the Christian journey is not meant to be walked alone. Through food, fellowship, honest conversation, and shared faith, I experienced the love of Christ in a powerful new way. What began as a simple invitation became a blessing that continues to impact my walk with God today.

WEEK 2

Sermon Notes

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS : : : : :

ICEBREAKER

- What is a rhythm you are hoping to get into or reengage this fall?
- Is there a word or phrase that you or someone in your family misheard or mispronounced?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the message?
2. Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10. Why might Samuel have had a hard time understanding God was calling him? Does hearing God's voice today feel similar or different from this scene?
3. Eli helps Samuel discern God's voice. What is discernment, and how can we use it to hear God's voice today?
4. What does it mean to be "called" or have "a calling?" Is that something everyone receives or is it only for specific people?
5. Read 1 Samuel 3:10-14, after this call, Samuel will become a great prophet and leader, but he will not always be popular with the people. Do you think Samuel would have agreed to God's plan if he knew all that it entailed? Why do you think God doesn't always give us the full picture? (watch this short video if you'd like more context on the book of Samuel: bibleproject.com/videos/1-samuel)
6. What is Eli's role in this story? How can you invite others to guide you in your faith story?
7. Who might be an "Eli" in your life who can help you hear the voice of God?

PRAYER PRACTICE

Practice Lectio Divina, a process of reading Scripture three times and listening to what God might be saying through it. Have three different people read. Read Proverbs 16:1-9. First, listen for a word or phrase that sticks out to you. Second, what feeling or emotion comes to mind? Third, what might God be inviting you to?

WEEK 2 DEVOTIONAL

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice

John 10:3-4

In this passage Jesus is depicted as a shepherd tending his flock (that's us). We're also given insight to the character of the Shepherd. He calls the sheep, he knows their name, he leads them. All of these things make Jesus not just a shepherd, but the Good Shepherd. He leads his sheep with care and consistency. Yet, in this passage we also learn something about the sheep. They know the Shepherd's voice and they follow it. How common is it for us to worry, wish, and wonder if we are hearing God's voice or if he is speaking to us at all.

The truth is that as a follower of Jesus, not only does God speak and guide you, but you know his voice. You hear the voice of Jesus as you read Scripture, as you talk to a friend, in the quiet of prayer, when we gather together. What you most often hear may not be in the form of words, but the sounds of the presence of God that brings the assurance that he is always with you.

Take some time to list out the nature of the Shepherd's voice. What does Jesus sound like? Then take some time in prayer to tell God that you're listening and ask Him to speak to you today.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Days 1-3

What in your life keeps you from hearing the voice of God? It could be distractions, your schedule, your surroundings, or your own thoughts. Bring those things to God, asking him to speak over the noise of our life.

Days 4-7

Take some time to reflect on the things God says to all of us. What sorts of things does he speak through Scripture? Consider the ways you have learned the voice of God without realizing it.

A HERE *I Am* STORY

COLE'S STORY

My story starts in Washington D.C., where I was visiting with my grandpa. I was walking down the street by myself to go to the metro station so I could visit my friend Stella's apartment who was working in D.C. for the summer. I had just crossed the street and out of the corner of my eye, I saw a woman in a wheelchair all by herself. She was slowly moving with her feet. I paused for a second, even though I had a place to be; it felt like God was calling me to ask her if she wanted any help, to be available.

"Excuse me, ma'am. Do you need any help?" I exclaimed. She responded with a "Sure" and off we went. As I pushed her down the street, we talked about her life and how she was doing. I learned that she had just gotten out of the hospital, had come from Delaware, and that her son had passed away. She mentioned something about a bag with a couple changes of clothes and some snacks that she had left next to a nearby church, so we went that way to retrieve it.

Sadly, when we got there, it was gone. She then decided she wanted to stop by a convenience store, so I helped her make some coffee. Afterward, I gave her a granola bar, as she had turned down my offer of money, and we said goodbye after I prayed for her.

I thank God for this experience as it helped me connect to another person and learn about her story, as I don't think many people had heard it. I think God used both of us that day to bless each other.

WEEK 3

Sermon Notes

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



ICEBREAKER

- What is a high and a low of your week?
- What are your thoughts or feelings on the Here I Am initiative so far?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the message?
2. Read Exodus 2:1-17. What are some complicating factors when it comes to Moses' past. What might we say would disqualify Moses from being called to lead the Israelites?
3. Read Exodus 3:11-12. What is Moses' initial response to being called by God? What is God's response to Moses? Do you believe God's same words are true for you today?
4. Read Exodus 4:10-17. Why do you think God is upset at Moses for his questions? What does this show both about God's character and about how he provides?
5. In what ways is Moses' story relatable to you? If you're comfortable sharing, are there parts of your past or insecurities that hold you back from being used by God? Why do those things still have power over us when we know God is all-powerful?
6. How might God want to use our past experiences?
7. Over these three weeks, have you felt more equipped or available to be used by God? Are there any ways you've responded to God in that area?

PRAYER PRACTICE

Write down an insecurity or limitation that holds you back. Put it in a bowl and have everyone from the group randomly select one. Take a minute to anonymously pray about each one.

WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9

After Moses dies, Joshua is tasked with leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. Can you imagine being in Joshua's place faced with the task of filling the shoes of Moses? There is no doubt that Joshua would be wondering if he has what it takes. Yet God doesn't spend much time convincing Joshua that he's capable. Instead, God gives Joshua something far better: His presence.

"I will be with you."

Those five words change everything. God's promise was never that Joshua would be enough on his own. The promise was that Joshua would never have to go alone.

The same promise belongs to us today. Following Jesus doesn't mean we suddenly become fearless, gifted, or perfectly equipped. It means that wherever God calls us, He goes with us.

I remember a season in my life when fear of failure kept me from stepping out in faith. My friend and pastor, Joe Johnson, stopped by my youth ministry office one day and noticed my hesitation. I was dragging my feet about seminary, hesitant to pursue a relationship with Michelle, and uncertain about several other steps. Joe gently challenged me, laid his hands on me, and prayed that God would melt away my fear. I can't fully explain what happened, but it felt like something released its grip on me. From that day forward, I began walking with a boldness that would shape much of my ministry. God used Joe's presence to remind me of His own promise: "I will be with you."

As you reflect today, consider where fear has become louder than God's promise. Instead of asking, "Am I enough," remember the better question: "Is God with me?" Scripture answers that question with a resounding yes.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Days 1-3 Where has fear or insecurity kept you from saying yes to something you sensed God inviting you toward? Bring those fears to God and ask Him to remind you that He is with you and will meet you again with grace and forgiveness.

Days 4-7 Think about a challenge or opportunity that feels bigger than your abilities. How would your perspective change if you truly believed God would go with you? Spend some time asking Him for the courage to take your next faithful step and move beyond what is comfortable.

A HERE *I Am* STORY

DON'S STORY

Several years ago, I was visiting my dad on Cape Cod, and we were talking about what I wanted to do in retirement. I had been thinking about visiting people in nursing homes and senior care facilities—people who were lonely, homebound, or just needed someone to spend time with them. My dad thought it was a wonderful idea and encouraged me to do it. Looking back, I realize God had been preparing me for this long before I knew it.

When I was a young, my mom used to take me with her to visit hospice patients and people from her church who needed a little company. To be honest, I didn't really want to go. I felt uncomfortable because I had never been around people who were nearing the end of their lives.

But my mom taught me that you don't have to have all the right words. Just being there, listening, holding someone's hand, or sharing a few minutes of your time could mean more than you realize.

Years later, those lessons became very personal.

My dad developed dementia and was living in memory care. I was blessed to spend his final days at his bedside. We talked about family memories, I told him how much I loved him, and I told him it was okay to go home and be with the Lord. Even though he no longer knew who I was, I certainly knew who he was. Holding his hand during those last days was one of the greatest privileges of my life.

About six years later, my mom entered hospice care. Once again, I had the privilege of being at the bedside of someone I loved. This time it was my mom—the same woman who had spent so many years visiting others.

Those experiences changed me. They strengthened my faith and gave me a deeper appreciation for God's promises and His presence, especially during life's hardest moments.

Today, I serve on our church's Spiritual Care Team. With JoAnn's guidance, I've had the privilege of visiting many of our church members and their families during difficult times.

People sometimes thank me for coming, but the truth is, I'm usually the one who leaves feeling blessed. Every visit reminds me that God doesn't expect us to have all the answers. Sometimes He simply asks us to show up, to listen, to pray, and to remind someone they are loved and not alone.

WEEK 4

Sermon Notes

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



ICEBREAKER

- What is something memorable you saved up to purchase?
- Did you get an allowance as a kid?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the message?
2. Read Exodus 35:4-5. Why do you think God asked the whole community to be a part of building the Tabernacle?
3. Read Exodus 35:20-22. What role does willingness and being “moved in your heart” have to do with generosity? Why does God care about the manner in which we give?
4. Read Exodus 36:6-7. What is unique about this instance? Why do you think stories like this feel so rare today?
5. What does this story show us about God’s heart for generosity?
6. What makes you resistant or open to being generous? What is the line between invitation and manipulation?
7. Does it matter what your attitude is when you give (if you’re joyful, hesitant, begrudging). Why or why not?

PRAYER PRACTICE

Read Psalm 65 aloud, using it as a prayer of thanksgiving.

WEEK 4 DEVOTIONAL

“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1b-2

Whenever we talk about giving, especially giving willingly, it is always helpful to first remember what God has given us. This Scripture reminds me that when Jesus is preparing to go to the cross and give up his life for our sins, he does so with joy in mind. It is not a twisted joy that delights in suffering, for as Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane, he asks if there is any other way that he might avoid the pain in front of him.

Instead, the joy comes from knowing that those whom he loves will receive the gift of new life; for Jesus, that makes the sacrifice worth everything. Whether it is your first or thousandth time, consider what Jesus gave for you. Thank him for his sacrifice and all that you have because of what he has done for you.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Days 1-3

Take some time reflecting on all of the things that God has given you. Create a list and then pray, thanking God.

Days 4-7

Reflect on your life. What parts of it are you most willing, and unwilling, to trust God with? Take some time in prayer celebrating the areas where trust comes easily, and giving over the areas you struggle to trust God in.

A HERE *I Am* STORY

CHRISTINA'S STORY

Last September, a late night phone call shook my world. My 66-year-old dad, a man who had always been incredibly sharp both mentally and physically, was unable to formulate coherent sentences. He left the ER with a preliminary diagnosis of glioblastoma, an aggressive brain tumor.

Coming on the tail end of another trying season, I was hit with the terrifying reality that his days were numbered. No matter how old we are, our parents undoubtedly hold a foundational place in our hearts. The thought of my dad no longer here was paralyzing.

Yet, amidst those initial, heavy stages of grief, I felt God inviting me to shift my posture. Instead of surrendering to anger or fear, I chose to step back and say, "Here I am, God; may your hands orchestrate beauty that only you can bring amidst the pain."

The reality of my dad's prognosis has not changed. However, holding this posture and watching my dad do the exact same thing, has

yielded some of the most healing moments that will forever impact our family's life. By leaving room for God to move, we have been given countless unexpected opportunities to share His faithfulness and goodness with close friends and total strangers alike.

God did not invite me into an easy circumstance, but He invited me to trust Him with the outcome. Stepping back to let Him move has turned his poor prognosis into one of the most beautiful and difficult gifts.

WEEK 5

Sermon Notes

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



ICEBREAKER

- Share a high and a low from your week.
- Share about a time you were the recipient of someone else's generosity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the message?
2. Read 2 Kings 4:1-7. Put yourself in the widow's position. What would you have been thinking or feeling in her position before and after Elisha's words? What does the widow know about God?
3. How does God provide for the widow in the story? How might this give us insight into the ways in which God wants to provide for us?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. What is the writer, Paul, expressing in this passage? How does this shape our expectation of what our lives will be like as Christians?
5. How do we see the provision of God in this passage? How is it similar or different to the widow's story?
6. Is it easy or challenging for you to view God as a provider? Why or why not, and does that change depending on specific areas of your life?
7. How would our generosity change if we saw God as providing everything we need?

PRAYER PRACTICE

Have each person write down something they need God to provide (and share if comfortable). Say a prayer thanking God for giving us everything we need.

WEEK 5 DEVOTIONAL

“As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.’ Jesus replied, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’ ‘We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,’ they answered. ‘Bring them here to me,’ he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied.”

Matthew 5:15-21

Ever since I was a kid, I’ve been fascinated by this story. First, I was drawn to the details: the big crowd, the small lunch, the multiplication and the leftovers. As I got older, I began considering what these details pointed to: Jesus, the great miracle worker who is concerned with the large crowd gathered.

This story is also a sign that something bigger is going on. It is a sign of the long promised One who God would bring to make all wrongs right. Here is Jesus righting wrongs, not through might and power as was the expectation, but through provision. The miracle is exciting, it’s useful, it shows Jesus’ power, but it’s just a sign. A sign of the One who is always faithful and wants to provide what we need. Do you ever find yourself wanting the sign more than who it points to; in other words, wanting what Jesus can offer more than Jesus himself? Take some time to reflect on that question and thank Jesus for being enough for you.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Days 1-3

When in your life have you seen God provide for you physically, emotionally, relationally, or spiritually? Thank God and pray that you would continue to see God as the provider for all that you need.

Days 4-7

Reflect on your relationship with money. How does it feel right now? (tight, enough, comfortable, plentiful). Consider how money does or doesn’t play a role in your faith. Ask God to help you see money the way He sees it.

A HERE *I Am* STORY

ALLI'S STORY

Hopefully it's not obvious when I'm playing on a Sunday or Wednesday, but I have struggled with severe performance anxiety ever since starting piano lessons in elementary school. Playing piano in front of other people was something I avoided as much as possible; I absolutely dreaded piano recitals. My heart races, my brain starts spiraling, and my fingers feel numb (which is definitely not helpful in playing the right notes).

So, when Mer asked me a few years ago if I would be willing to step in and play with the Circuit band, I probably broke out in a cold sweat. But, despite my fear, I had that gut-feeling nudge that I've come to know as God prompting me to say "here I am."

Because of that response, I've had so many amazing experiences! I've learned how the Spirit is present in worship even when I freeze up or play the wrong notes. I've learned new ways to trust God through my nerves, and techniques for prayer when my anxiety spikes. I've gotten to know my fellow

musicians and hear how God is using their musical talents inside and outside of Shepherd. And, I've been so encouraged by the kind words of this congregation.

Even though my "yes" was full of fear and uncertainty, God has used it to help me grow, and now I look forward to playing and love being able to participate in leading worship (despite the 6:30am rehearsal time!). I pray that my "here I am" has been a blessing to Shepherd of the Valley.

WEEK 6

Sermon Notes

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS : : : : :

ICEBREAKER

- What is something you're looking forward to in the next month?
- As we approach the end of the Here I Am series, what are your reflections or learnings?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the message?
2. Read Matthew 13:44-46. What does this passage tell us about the Kingdom of Heaven and how we should invest in it? (For a short explanation of the Kingdom look at this video: bibleproject.com/videos/gospel-kingdom)
3. Read Luke 12:31-21. What is going through the mind of the rich man? Do you think his actions are reasonable? Do you see parallels to our behaviors today?
4. Why does Jesus warn about greed in this passage? Where do we see greed today? How do we know if we're greedy or not?
5. Read Luke 12:21. What does it mean to be rich toward God? Can we have a lot stored up for ourselves and still be rich toward God? What sorts of things do we see people "store up?" What are good and bad things to store up?
6. Compare the two parables together. What invitation might God be inviting you to when considering these passages?

PRAYER PRACTICE

Practice popcorn prayer. As a group, join hands to pray. Each person is invited to pray, whether a single word or a few sentences. Once you are done or if you wish to pass, simply squeeze the hand of the person next to you to pass the prayer.

WEEK 6 DEVOTIONAL

"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth."

Mark 10:21-22

In this interaction a man comes to Jesus and says that he has kept all of the commandments – what else must he do to gain eternal life? Jesus' response sends the man away downcast. There is a lot of debate about this story, but Jesus makes the point that wealth can't buy you a place in the Kingdom – only Jesus can. It is also a reminder that with Jesus anything we gain is infinitely greater than what we give up.

The Kingdom of God works like that. Following Jesus isn't about giving things up simply for the sake of sacrifice. It's about discovering that life with Him is the greatest treasure we could ever possess. When we begin to see His Kingdom for what it truly is, generosity becomes less about losing something and more about investing in what will last forever.

As our Here I Am journey comes to an end, remember that God has never been after your money as much as He has been after your heart. Jesus invites us to treasure what He treasures and to invest our lives in the things that have eternal value. When Christ becomes our greatest treasure, everything else begins to find its proper place.

Take a few moments today to thank God for the treasure you have already received in Jesus. Ask Him to continue shaping your heart so that your entire life reflects what matters most.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Days 1-3

What receives the greatest investment of your time, attention, and resources right now? Does that reflect what you most want to treasure? Spend some time asking God to align your priorities with His Kingdom.

Days 4-7

As you finish this Here I Am series, where have you seen God growing your trust, your generosity, or your willingness to be available? Also, what are your hopes for Shepherd for the future? Thank God for His work in your life and our church community. Ask Him to continue shaping you into someone who joyfully says, "Here I am" and ask Him to show you how you might be a part of creating Shepherd's future.

A HERE *I Am* STORY

KRIS'S STORY

Jani would love these.

I stared at the nearly blooming pot of tulips. A friend had given me the flowers because her kitten was eating the leaves (toxic!). Throughout the day, I glanced at them. The pink buds were ready to burst.

Each time I looked, I thought again: Jani would love these.

Jani was my neighbor, an old woman with failing health who had loved gardening. I told myself she probably had flowers at home. I tried to work.

Jani would love these.

The thought was so persistent, so insistent, that I wondered: is this the Holy Spirit? I am not one who regularly senses the Spirit. And giving away these flowers seemed insignificant. Inconvenient. I had things to do, emails to review, other urgent things I now cannot recall. And I liked the flowers.

I focused on my laptop. I looked at the tulips.

Jani would love these.

"Really, God?"

I grabbed my coat and the flowers and walked out the door. I hoped Jani wasn't home.

She answered, after taking a long time to walk to the door with her walker. So glad to see me, she invited me in. She oohed and ahed over the tulips, tried to guess what variety they were.

We talked for about 15 minutes before I asked, "What's going on with your curtains?" She had three rods, curtains attached, lying across the backs of her sofa and chairs.

"All washed and ironed," she said. "Ready to go back up, in case Gracie from across the alley stops by, so I can ask for help."

I looked up. The rods simply needed to be lifted up into their pole hooks. The job took me less than 2 minutes. Jani gushed with thanks.

I returned home, my heart full.

I knew, unmistakably, God had invited me to visit Jani that day. He invited me to respond "here I am" with simple flowers, the strength to lift curtain rods into place and, mostly, a bit of time to share with a lonely neighbor.

Not long after, Jani passed away. That day was the last time I saw her.

Now, whenever I see tulips, I recall how that visit blessed me. And remember: Jani would love these.

HERE *I Am* GOALS



Goal 1

RENOVATE AND REIMAGINE OUR SPACES.

Our building has served us well for twenty years, but key infrastructure and worship environments have reached end-of-life functionality. We face a choice: We can invest in our building now for longer-term functionality and ministry model adaptation, or we can defer for 5-10 years until most of our spaces will be overdue for a refresh and repair.

We know God calls us to steward both our building and our ministries well, and we trust that modernizing our space communicates clearly what matters most: people are our priority, just like the choices made in schools, airports, and coffee shops. Following years of conducting intentional master planning (as done by healthy forward-thinking organizations), we believe the wisest choice is to renovate now in order to multiply our impact now and into the future.



We are moving beyond "status quo" repairs to create environments that foster connection.

HOSPITALITY:

Designing spaces for people to linger and connect

WORSHIP:

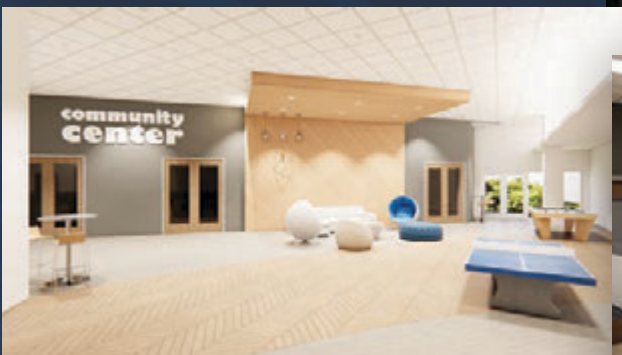
Updating tech and environments for in-person and online ministry

NEXT GEN:

Creating "living room" spaces for kids, students, and adults

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Refreshing the full building, including kitchens and bathrooms



Goal 2

MULTIPLY MISSION PARTNER IMPACT.

Legacy extends outward and puts others first. This initiative includes investments to support mission partners' impact as they improve their own facilities and create welcoming spaces. We will continue our regular benevolence gifts to mission partners (\$600K over two years), with a goal to provide an extra tithe to these mission partners who are serving Jesus in our communities and around the world (an additional \$600K over two years). We plan to provide significant support to two long-standing partners, one local – Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities, and one international – Haiti Teen Challenge, who also have specific plans for facility improvements. Our goal is to provide \$1.8M in gifts between these two partners.

UNION GOSPEL MISSION TWIN CITIES

While 47% of people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota are families, the reality is that less than 200 beds are available for families in the Twin Cities. Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities (UGMTC), an established Shepherd mission partner, has been caring for people experiencing homelessness, hunger and addiction in the Twin Cities since 1902, but for every family who is welcomed, they have to say no to two others.

To meet this moment, UGMTC is launching a campaign to construct a new Women and Children's Campus – one that nearly triples their capacity (from approximately 55 women and children to up to 150 each night) and redefines what is possible for families experiencing homelessness. This new facility will provide a welcoming, trauma-informed home where single women and mothers with children who have experienced trauma or homelessness can find safety, stability and hope. It will bring shelter, supportive services, Christ-centered care, mental health services, education, employment support and family resources together under one roof. Designed with women and children in mind, the center will help UGMTC serve more families and provide the personalized support and resources they need to build a brighter future.





HAITI TEEN CHALLENGE

Haiti Teen Challenge transforms lives in Haiti by equipping youth through faith, recovery, and leadership to rebuild their nation with hope. Haiti Teen Challenge is currently at full capacity, with hundreds of qualified candidates turned away each day. The Port-au-Prince campus has become a center for life transformation, leadership development, business growth, and national renewal. Built on a foundation of strong governance, fiscal accountability, and faithful stewardship, it seeks to expand this ministry hub in partnership with Shepherd of the Valley.

EXPANSION PRIORITIES

- Establish a permanent Men's Center to increase the capacity and long-term impact of the men's program.
- Expand campus facilities to better serve both Haiti Teen Challenge and Rendezvous Christ Church (RVC), Haiti's fastest-growing church, which currently meets on the HTC campus.

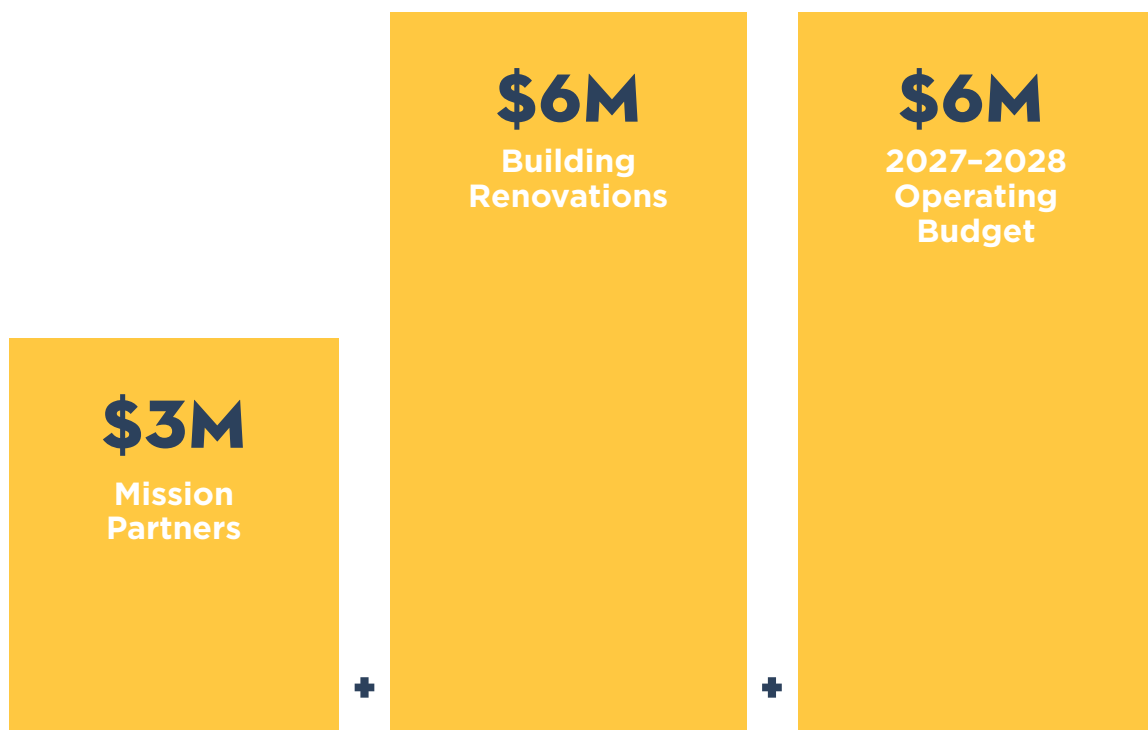
"This investment from Shepherd of the Valley will transform our Port-au-Prince campus into a fully realized ministry hub, providing a permanent home for our Men's Center while expanding our ability to serve students, graduates, RVC, and the surrounding community. We are deeply grateful for Shepherd's shared vision of 'For The One' and look forward to seeing how this partnership will transform lives in Port-au-Prince and beyond."

— Dr. Julio Volcy

Goal 3

EXPAND OUR HEART OF GENEROSITY.

A two-year endeavor (2027-2028), Here I Am uses a one-fund model, combining our renovation project and mission partner gifts with our annual operating budget into a single, unified, God-sized goal.



The goal is

\$15 MILLION & 100% PARTICIPATION

everyone engaging as they are able, to shape the church of today and tomorrow, with no debt incurred.



OUR RESPONSE

Fifty years ago, Shepherd's founders said, "Here I am." Because of their sacrifice, we worship, connect, and serve in the spaces they prepared. Now, it is our turn to ensure the next generation encounters the love of Jesus.

"I didn't believe in God a year ago. I have found true, caring, committed-to-Jesus friends. I have found the love of Jesus and the grace of God." — Shepherd member

Now it is our turn.

The question before us – *"Who will shape the church of tomorrow?"* – asks us to trust God and take a step of faith. It also asks: Will we be available? Will we invest now so that children, friends, neighbors, and strangers can encounter the welcoming love of Jesus?

TWO-YEAR GIVING CHART

GOAL: \$15M

GIFTS NEEDED	TWO-YEAR GIFT OF	MONTHLY GIFT OF	GIFT LEVEL TOTAL
1	\$3,000,000	\$125,000	\$3,000,000
1	\$2,000,000	\$83,333	\$2,000,000
2	\$1,000,000	\$41,667	\$2,000,000
2	\$750,000	\$31,250	\$1,500,000
2	\$500,000	\$20,833	\$1,000,000
2	\$250,000	\$10,417	\$500,000
2	\$150,000	\$6,250	\$300,000
10	\$100,000	\$4,167	\$1,000,000
10	\$75,000	\$3,125	\$750,000
10	\$50,000	\$2,083	\$500,000
10	\$35,000	\$1,458	\$350,000
10	\$25,000	\$1,042	\$250,000
50	\$10,000	\$417	\$500,000
50	\$7,500	\$313	\$375,000
50	\$4,800	\$200	\$240,000
50	\$3,600	\$150	\$180,000
50	\$2,400	\$100	\$120,000
many	<\$2,400	< \$100	\$435,000
TOTAL GIFT GOAL: \$15,000,000			



GOD-SIZED GOALS

God is up to something. We want to join him in it.

1

Renovate and Reimagine Our Spaces.

We are moving beyond "status quo" repairs to create environments that foster connection.

- Worship & Tech: From aging tech to future-ready environments.
- Hospitality: From passing through to lingering together.
- Next Gen: From classrooms to "living rooms."
- Facility: From functional to fully refreshed.

2

Multiply Mission Partner Impact.

Legacy extends outward and puts others first. This initiative includes investments to support mission partners as they improve their own facilities in order to grow their impact.

3

Expand Our Heart of Generosity.

A two-year endeavor (2027-2028), Here I Am uses a one-fund model, combining our renovation project with our annual operating budget into a single, unified goal.

- \$6M: Building Renovations
- \$3M: Mission Partners
- \$6M: 2027-2028 Operating Budget

**We're inviting 100% participation,
in whatever way each of us is able.**

Here I Am COMMITMENT CARD

TWO-YEAR COMMITMENT

\$ _____ My regular offering in one year
(General Budget, Missions, Benevolence, etc.)

+

\$ _____ My expanded annual generosity
for Here I Am

=

\$ _____ x Two Years = \$ _____

+

Gifts from stored resources
(Savings, Stock, Property, Sale of Assets, etc.) \$ _____

= _____

MY TWO-YEAR COMMITMENT

\$ _____

(January 2027 - December 2028)

NAME(S) _____

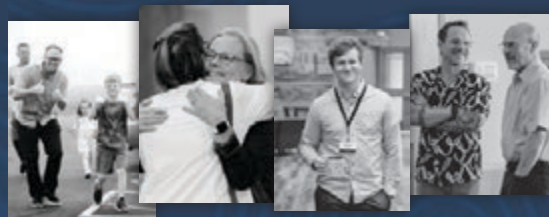
ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

1	\$3,000,000	\$125,000	\$3,000,000
1	\$2,000,000	\$83,333	\$2,000,000
2	\$1,000,000	\$41,667	\$2,000,000
2	\$750,000	\$31,250	\$1,500,000
2	\$500,000	\$20,833	\$1,000,000
2	\$250,000	\$10,417	\$500,000
2	\$150,000	\$6,250	\$300,000
10	\$100,000	\$4,167	\$1,000,000
10	\$75,000	\$3,125	\$750,000
10	\$50,000	\$2,083	\$500,000
10	\$35,000	\$1,458	\$350,000
10	\$25,000	\$1,042	\$250,000
50	\$10,000	\$417	\$500,000
50	\$7,500	\$313	\$375,000
50	\$4,800	\$200	\$240,000
50	\$3,600	\$150	\$180,000
50	\$2,400	\$100	\$120,000
many	<\$2,400	< \$100	\$435,000
TOTAL GIFT GOAL: \$15,000,000			

I Am



COMMITMENT CARD

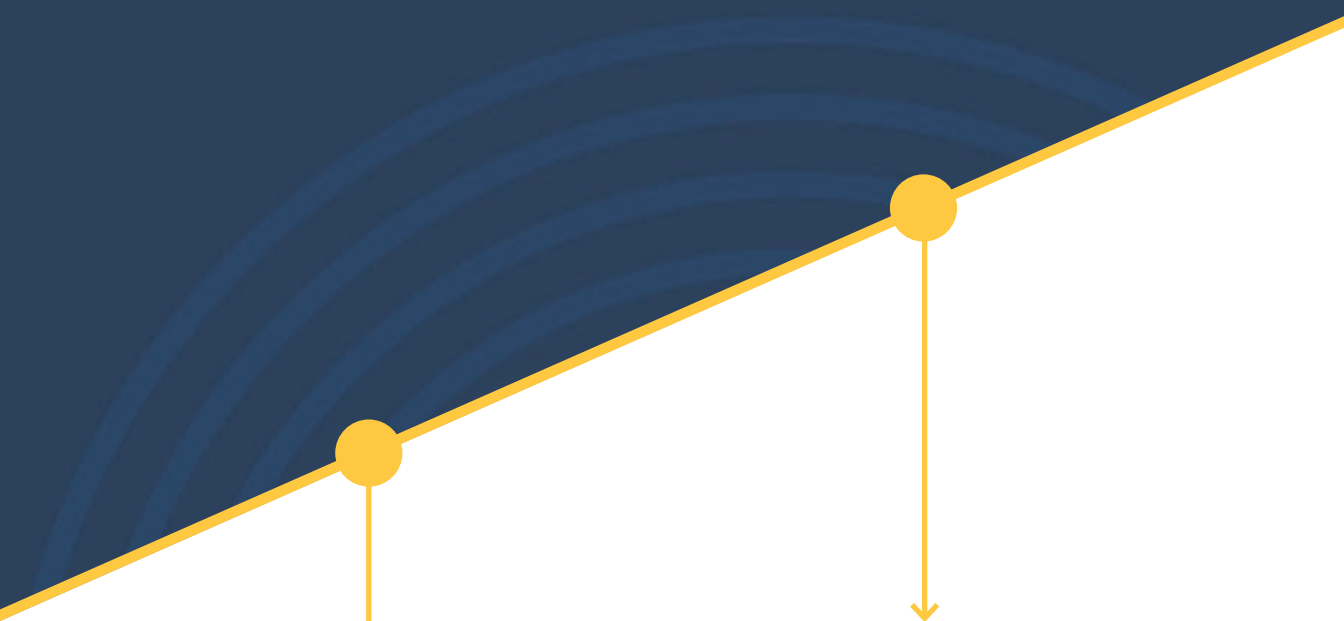
SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY

GENEROSITY PATHWAY

Your path to God-honoring generosity

Over the next two years, we're focusing all of our generosity into one fund. This fund will provide the resources needed to operate the ministries here at Shepherd, renovate and reimagine our building, and multiply the impact for mission partners in our community and world. We invite everyone at Shepherd to experience the adventure of putting God first through greater faith, surrender, and generosity. We give out of our love for Jesus—take your next step along the generosity pathway!

- Pray about your participation in Here I Am
- Use the commitment card to communicate your Here I Am gift intention to Shepherd
- Go to sov.church/hereiam for ongoing information about the Here I Am initiative



FIRST-TIME GIVER

I have not yet given to God's work through Shepherd, but I will take that step.

RESPONSIVE GIVER

I give occasionally when I feel God moving, or in response to a specific need.



EXTRAVAGANT GIVER

I give beyond a tithe, knowing that I am simply a steward for all that God has given me.

INTENTIONAL GIVER

I gladly tithe, giving God the first 10% of my income, knowing that all I am and have belongs to Him, confident He will provide for my needs.

CONSISTENT GIVER

I give a consistent, planned amount of my income to God's work through Shepherd.

WHERE ARE YOU ON THE GENEROSITY PATHWAY?

WHERE DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS LEADING YOU TO BE?



FAQS

WHO IS HERE I AM FOR?

Everyone! Whether you have been at Shepherd for our entire 49-year history or you are brand new, we encourage your participation in Here I Am. It is all about joining God in what he is up to, answering the call to shape the church of tomorrow.

WHAT ARE YOU ASKING ME TO DO?

We are asking you to ask God how He wants you to respond to the Here I Am initiative. Talk with your family about what it means for you to engage in Jesus' mission more fully with your time, talent and treasure. Find details at sov.church/hereiam and prepare to be amazed at what God will do in your life! Plan to participate throughout the six-week series, and especially on **Commitment Sundays October 18 and 25.**

CAN I DESIGNATE MY GIFT?

Shepherd has one general fund that supports ministry within our walls, locally, and around the world. Your gift to Here I Am, which includes two years of operating expenses, renovation costs, and mission partner gifts, will be a part of the general fund.



HOW LONG IS MY GIFT INTENTION? CAN I CHANGE IT?

Here I Am is a two-year period of expanded giving from January 2027 through December 2028. If unforeseen circumstances arise, you may modify your gift intention at any time during the 24-month period by calling our office at **651.436.8248**.

ARE THERE ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GIVE TO HERE I AM BESIDES CASH?

Be creative! Consider stored assets you own. Gifts of appreciated property (stocks, real estate, mutual funds, jewelry, artwork, collectibles, etc.) often make great gifts with significant tax advantages. Please first consult with a financial advisor for guidance in your particular situation, and contact Michael Faust, Executive Director, for help making a non-cash gift to Here I Am.

Email: mfaust@sov.church | **Phone:** 651.436.8248

OTHER QUESTIONS?

If you have other questions don't hesitate to ask! Find information at sov.church/hereiam. Email **office@sov.church** or call us at **651.436.8248**.





HERE I AM IS OUR
OPPORTUNITY TO
SAY, TOGETHER:
**LORD, HERE WE
ARE. SEND US.**

SHEPHERD
OF THE VALLEY