



# The Link

WINTER 2015

*Telling the Stories God is Writing at Little Falls Church*

We  
joyfully  
**PROCLAIM**  
the love  
of God in  
Jesus Christ,  
**GROW**  
in His truth,  
and  
**SHARE**  
His Gospel  
with our  
neighbors.

*Be exalted,  
O God,  
above the  
heavens!  
Let  
YOUR GLORY  
be over all the  
earth!*

*- Psalm 108:5*

## Moving Forward in God's Vision

*Dr. Matt Merrill, Pastor*

Over the last 30 months, God has blessed Little Falls in accomplishing His vision for our congregation. As I sit back reflecting on 2014 and looking forward to 2015, I am particularly grateful for the vision He gave and the way He is empowering us to accomplish so much of it. To Him be the glory!

There are four pillars of the vision God gave us in the summer of 2012. The first is **Joyful, Christ-Centered Worship**. God's provision for Todd Robinson to lead our worship ministries is a huge blessing. Worship attendance at the 9:30 service has continued to grow, with so many people excitedly bringing friends. In faith, we have begun praying, questioning and dreaming about how to help the 11:00 service grow in energy and attendance. I believe God will do great things in 2015 as we continue to seek and praise Him in worship.

The second pillar of the vision is **Every Member a Student**. The dynamic duo of Chris Lugo and Jennifer Greenleaf gives us such great leadership in this area. Jennifer is taking our already great children's ministry to new heights, while Chris' passion for discipling teens is making a huge impact. As we enter into 2015, the biggest growth area for us will be with adults. After a lot of prayer, thought and seeking advice from other churches, we will be launching small groups that will very intentionally help members grow while forming deep relationships with others.

The third pillar of the vision is being a church of **Relevance and Relationships**. In all of our teaching ministries, we are asking the question: "How will this content be *helpful* to those who are receiving it?" It is an area I am continuing to grow in as a preacher and teacher. Programs such as Refill Wednesdays and our All Church Retreat continue to help people form authentic relationships with one another. If you missed the retreat this year – please go ahead and mark

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it on your calendar for 2015: November 14-15. Coming on the retreat is the best thing you can do to get to know other members.

I remain very concerned that too many people at Little Falls don't have enough deep friendships within the church. These sorts of relationships are not just nice, they are vital for care and growth to happen. Jennifer and I are confident that the new small groups will be a major step forward in this area.

Finally, we believe God wants us to be a church where we are **Always Including One More**. Every time we are together, we need to be asking the question: "Who do we know who is not here who would be blessed by being here?" One of my favorite memories of 2014 was baptizing the Platt family, who were invited here by the Puttocks, who then told the Bloomers about the church. That's the way it should work.

I can't wait to see what God will do in 2015. I am looking forward to seeing the 11:00 service revitalized, the launching of adult small groups and God's continual surprises along the way.



May YOUR LOVE  
propel us  
into the stories of  
justice and righteousness  
You plan to write this year on  
earth, in our communities  
and cities.

May we  
dance and suffer,  
work and pray,  
serve and love,  
ALL to your glory.

- Scotty Smith



## A View from the All Church Retreat

*Kelly Pulsifer, Elder*

My family was among the earliest registrants for the All Church Retreat this year. Not because we don't already have a million things to do every weekend and were looking for something to fill our time, but because we had such a fabulous and meaningful time last year. Our first Little Falls All Church retreat last fall felt in many ways like a family reunion. I knew this year good things were once again in store for my family and me.



Over 100 members of our church family gathered this year at the Skycroft Retreat Center. The weather was glorious, the donuts were delicious and the coffee from Hebrews Coffee Shop was divine. We kicked off the weekend with games. It was fun chasing (walk, don't run) and being chased by my husband around the crowded room, then teaming up with him to play tag with another team. We played games to have fun, let down our guards, and enjoy being together. What a wonderful break from what most of us experience day to day!

A good portion of Saturday was spent enjoying each other's company, playing games, hiking, doing Pilates together, and just talking. It was delightful to see Little Falls Church members of all ages smiling, laughing, talking, listening and being present with one another. On a typical Sunday, many of us have things to do after church. Even if we spend time talking to fellow church members between the 9:30 and 11:00 services, our conversations are short. We promise to catch up when we have time. We mention our joys or concerns but often don't take the time to go into depth. We know about each other, but often don't know each other well. We are, in our ordinary lives, the personae that we want others to see. The focus of a good portion of the rest of the retreat, and really the gift of the weekend, was the time spent reflecting on whom God made us to be, and when and how we felt His presence. Even a step further, we had the opportunity to share our faith journeys with others and connect in a small group setting.

One component of the retreat was hearing a few share their "I Am From" stories. Part poem, part testimony. It is a unique way to let others know more about who you are and where you have been. I think the best way to explain what the All Church Retreat meant to me is to share a little bit about me:

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*"I don't really want people looking to me for inspiration. I just want to be a sign along the way that points toward Heaven".*

*- Bethany Hamilton, author of "Soul Surfer"*

*I am from Seattle, Washington and Arlington, Virginia.*

*I am from a dad who was sent to Vietnam when my sister and I were both babies, who came back and spent so much time going to school and working hard to provide us comfort and security that he was never home, and a mom who was always home for us.*

*I am from all the responsibility, pressure and expectation of being the eldest of three girls; and from the joy and laughter and fun of being part of the inseparable KellyJulieandAmy.*

*I am from a big, close-knit family who takes in friends-as-family, giving to them more than we can often afford to give.*

*I am from a love of school and friends and getting in trouble in class for talking all the time.*

*I am from meeting Carrie in second grade and counting her as my best friend 37 years later.*

*I am from ballet, band, Camp Fire, debate and student government.*

*I am from Honors classes, peer tutoring, and leadership conferences.*

*I am from being the second person in my family after my dad to graduate from college, and being the only person in my family to go to law school.*

*I am from struggling to figure out who I was on the opposite side of the country from all my friends and family, and in the struggle, realizing how much they meant to me.*

*I am from a bunch of very bad choices when it came to relationships, before dear friends introduced me to Frank. I am from almost 18 years of marriage, and feeling blessed every day that we are together.*

*I am from "having to find a church" because Frank wanted to make sure when we had kids that they would be baptized. And I am from, when I was pregnant with my second, breaking down in tears during a sermon because for the first time I felt Jesus holding me in his arms.*

*I am from a devastating fire and the miracle God worked in our neighborhood, in our church and in our hearts to bring healing.*

*I am from Delaney, Amelia, Joseph and David, and the gift of God each one is, and the blessing that it is to be their mom.*

*I am from a grandmother who, when she was 12, with her mother and little brothers, fled an abusive and mentally ill father. I am from working for 15 years as a legal advocate on behalf of victims of domestic violence; and I am from walking away from victim advocacy to commit myself more fully to being a better wife, mother and person, even if I feel like it's an ongoing struggle.*

*I am from gratitude: for all the blessings and the struggles; for feeling Jesus present in my life; for being part of the church family that is Little Falls.*