

Unlocking the Seeds of Generosity Multiply Week 1

By Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

At Growth Track, we like to play a fun game. I'll pause here to explain: Growth Track is a class we offer a few times a year. It's for anyone who wants to grow—whether in faith, connections, or service. At the end of the class, there's an optional membership portion. Growth Track often attracts newer people who want to connect and learn more about Horizons.

One of the games we play is a quiz. While it might not sound fun to everyone, it's an enjoyable way for people to get to know Horizons a little better. The questions cover things like the number of staff members, the number of trees on the Horizons property (come back next Sunday to find out, or feel free to count them yourself), and details about our youth and children's programs. We also ask about our previous worship spaces before we built this building.

One of the questions that often stumps people, including longtime members, is: What does BOB stand for? If you don't know, "BOB" usually refers to the youth room, but it's used for a variety of events and gatherings. The room is just beyond the bathrooms, but that's not the reason behind the name. "BOB" actually stands for "Built on Becoming." The story goes that the youth named it BOB first because it sounded fun, and later decided to give it a meaning. Rumor has it that someone on today's worship band had a part in naming it.

We all have things in our lives—places, events, traditions—that we may not know the full story behind. After last Sunday's message, several people mentioned they didn't know we had a prayer path on our property. This path was established long before my time and before many of you joined Horizons. Today, we'll invite you to walk the prayer path and pray for our neighborhood, which I'll discuss more in a moment.

You might have contributed to something meaningful in someone's life or a community project, but later wondered what happened to it. As a former youth pastor, I often wonder about the kids I mentored—now adults—and how they're doing today. Similarly, the Apostle Paul traveled widely, planting seeds of the good news of Jesus and starting churches across the Mediterranean. Sometimes he'd receive updates about these churches and would write letters—some encouraging, some corrective.

Paul's letters to the church in Corinth are examples of this. In 1 Corinthians 3, he addresses some issues in the church that stemmed from spiritual immaturity and division. Starting in verse 1, he writes:

"Brothers and sisters, I couldn't talk to you like spiritual people but like unspiritual people, like babies in Christ. I gave you milk to drink instead of solid food because you weren't ready for it yet. Now you're still not ready because you are still unspiritual. When jealousy and fighting exist among you, aren't you acting like unspiritual people? When one says, 'I belong to Paul,' and another says, 'I belong to Apollos,' aren't you acting like people without the Spirit?"

In the Corinthian church, some were divided over whether to follow Paul or Apollos. Paul urged them to remember they were serving someone far greater. He recognized that a divided church could not function effectively in its mission.

At Horizons, while we don't experience a lot of division, we don't always think alike, nor do we all agree. However, we've committed to a shared purpose that's larger than any disagreements. This is a rare quality in organizations today, and I deeply appreciate it. A huge shout-out to the incredible Horizons leadership team guiding us in this direction.

Paul wrote nine letters to churches, and he was straightforward with them, addressing their issues. Though Horizons isn't dealing with significant conflicts, we aren't perfect. I often wonder what a letter from Paul to Horizons would say. I imagine one of his questions would be, "What are you doing with the resources God has given you—your building, your land?"

Over the past year, the steering team, vision team, property management team, and other leaders have been wrestling with this question. This reflection has led to some exciting developments on our property. Take a look at this video.

Joe Reeder: "Hi, I'm Joe Reeder. My family and I have been members here for about eight years, and we've loved being a part of Horizons. Recently, I proposed an idea that the church supported: building a disc golf course. I first discovered disc golf as a teenager and have loved it ever since. It's a sport that brings camaraderie, outdoor exercise, and occasional moments of perfection. After talking with friends and figuring out the costs, I submitted a proposal to the property management team, who approved it. Now, I'm working to bring this vision to life on Horizons' property."

Disc golf, as Joe explained, is a growing sport with a strong community element. The course is actually finished, and we've already seen people enjoying it. Part of our prayer today will be for those who visit our property.

Another recent project was updating our prayer path. David Morris, from our vision team, wrote some beautiful words for the prayer signs along the path, weaving in our values and vision. Within 24 hours of putting up the signs, a neighbor emailed us: "I've been walking the Horizons path daily with my dog. I noticed the new signs, and a couple of them really touched me, especially Matthew 11:28—it's my favorite verse. I appreciate the work you've done and enjoy the path. It's a bit of peace in the city."

This outreach reflects our mission: to connect with and encourage our neighbors to live God's love.

Returning to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he writes, "What is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants who helped you believe. I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow." Paul reminds us that while each of us plays a role, it is God who gives growth. Joe planted the idea of the disc golf course and contributed funds and labor. Now, it's up to others to help nurture it, so God can continue His work.

Paul might also ask us at Horizons, “Are you doing your part? Are you spiritually mature, or are you still growing?” He might challenge me, as your pastor, to encourage everyone to engage fully in their faith. Churches are sustained by everyone giving, praying, serving, and inviting others.

In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul says, “I laid a foundation... but someone else is building on it.” Just as Paul and others built the foundation, so have past and present members built the foundation for Horizons. Bobby Adams, a longtime member, shared how, before the building was completed, people wrote prayers and words of hope on the beams. Our church was built on that foundation, and it continues to multiply through acts of generosity and faith.

Today, we’ll close by inviting you to walk our prayer path, a 10-20 minute journey, where you’ll find new prayer signs and our completed disc golf course. If you can’t join the walk, we have booklets to guide you in prayer. As you pray, consider the neighbors who may come here—neighbors who may not have a church or who may not know Jesus.

Part of the membership commitment at Horizons is to support the church with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. If Horizons is your church home, ask yourself, “Am I upholding these vows?” Give with purpose, serve with faith, and invite with intention, trusting that God will work through your efforts.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, help us to plant and water with faith. Thank you for blessing us with people, prayers, and resources to share your love. Guide us to be a light in this city. In Jesus’ name, Amen.