

Hello Bloom Friend –

In case you missed our gathering on January 29, in which we talked about Bloom's plans for the coming year, we wanted to make this available to you so that you could be up to speed with what we're doing and where we're going.

Our **vision**, as you know, is *to see the Kingdom of God "bloom" in the Greater Denver area by saturating it with a network of house churches in which people are formed together for Jesus and his mission.* The last six months in particular have been a time of beautiful growth for us as a community. As our little "gardens of resurrection" (house churches) have grown and flourished, so also has the greater "garden" (the network). Towards the end of last year we were running around 150 folks at our Sunday evening gathering, and during the last couple weeks of January we averaged around 175. It's been a fun season for us.

With growth, however, comes questions about our future. Where are we headed as a congregation? Has the story changed? The short answer is "No, nor will it." We will always be committed to a philosophy that says *"If you put spiritual formation, community, and mission on the front end of everything you do, the rest will take care of itself."* We really do believe that, and seek to order our community by it.

One of the images that has always guided our philosophy of ministry at Bloom has been Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. He says:

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, **yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree**, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32)*

The mustard seed becomes a tree... What starts out as small and insignificant over time grows up into a tree providing shelter, shade, and stability for the whole garden.

As you might know, Bloom began very much like the mustard seed: a small gathering of folks trying to live as though Jesus was really working to bring his kingdom to Denver through them. In time, we have grown to something more substantial. Paul's image of the church as a "colony of heaven" is becoming increasingly true of us.

With that, our sense as we look ahead into 2012 is that the Lord is leading us into a season characterized by three things:

Enduring stability – Jeremiah told the exiles living in pagan Babylon to "build houses and settle down", making themselves a permanent part of the social tapestry of Babylon in order to "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29). As we think about the future of this congregation, we want to begin moving intentionally in the direction of *enduring stability* here in the city of Denver.

What does that mean for us? In 2012 we'll begin stashing \$1,000/month away in order to save for a permanent facility one day.

Depth of ministry – As the community is growing in *breadth*, increasingly we are seeing the impossibility of providing *depth* of ministry with a 1.5ish pastoral staff. There simply isn't enough time in the day to do what needs to be done. A well-rounded pastoral is essential for accomplishing what we sense we are called to do.

What does that mean for us? In addition to our pastoral “fellow” Rusty Gates stepping up the amount of time he devotes each week to Bloom, we're pleased to announce the arrival of Jamie and Bre Mertens into the Bloom family. Jamie and Bre have recently wrapped up a five year tenure as youth pastors in Boulder in order to join the Bloom community. Our plan is to ease them into our ministry over the next few months by having Jamie join us for staff meetings, continue to lead our setup and hospitality department, do some announcements here and there, and then plant a new BOULDER HOUSE CHURCH (yes!) around spring break time. This is a HUGE addition for us, and we're eager to see the good that God will bring out of it.

Faithful presence – What kind of an impact is Bloom making beyond its walls? Or to ask the question another way, if Bloom vanished tomorrow, would Denver have reason to mourn? Those are challenging questions. But they are the right ones. We think that as the strength of Bloom rises, Denver (and the wider world around us) should be blessed. Our being “faithfully present” should mean an increase in tangible “shalom”.

What does that mean for us? This year we're going to devote 20% of our income to ministries of mercy and church planting, both locally and abroad, believing that our vitality should mean vitality for others.

Now to give you some perspective, during the last quarter of 2011, we ran our ministry on an average of about \$6,700/mo., or about \$45/mo. per person. **To do what we plan to do this year, we'll need to bring in about \$12,500/mo., which works out to about \$83/mo. per person.** It's completely within our reach.

The question is whether or not we're going to be **builders** or **consumers**. Most of our generation (the under 35 crowd) tends to simply consume. *Our conviction, however, is that as persons made in the “image and likeness of God”, our call is always to build—to intentionally order God's world towards what is good, true, and beautiful.* A community filled with people passionate about “building” can accomplish an extraordinary amount together.

So our challenge to you, Bloom friend, is simple – **come and build with us.** There are bright days ahead.

The Bloom Leadership Team