



**Church Context:** Christ Community ([www.cceei.org](http://www.cceei.org)) is a smaller congregation (around 50) affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA). Christ Community began back in 1957 and had many difficulties in its history. Christ Community is located about 76 minutes east of New York City on Long Island.

**Introduction:** I was introduced to G&M, PRS and JSU through Charles Kim. I am grateful to have attended in-person PRS a few times at the G&M building in New York City to experience the power of the reading of God’s Word come to life. I also learned so much about the power of communal learning. Therefore, I hope to continue to bring this methodology into my church.

**Summary:** After arriving at our church in July 2018, we have been fortunate enough to implement a practice of PRS in our regular routine weekly on Sundays. We also utilized PRS with our sister church, Massapequa Reformed Church in the Spring of 2020 when the pandemic first hit via Zoom and that was incredibly well received. We have also utilized “The Prodigal God” and “The Radical Disciple” for our JSU Book Studies previously.

As the pandemic continued to drag on, we felt that it would be important to bring back communal learning together once again via Zoom. We utilized PRS in the Spring of 2020, so we opted to find a book to study together for the Fall of 2020. We contemplated between “Counterfeit Gods” by Tim Keller and “Anxious for Nothing” by Max Lucado, but with much prayer and discernment, we opted to go with “Counterfeit Gods.” With the current state of our nation with the polarity, division, and unrest, as well as the heated presidential election season, this book proved to be timely.

Utilizing Zoom has proved to have some shortcomings, but at the same time, utilizing the breakout room features and having designated “hosts” help facilitate the conversation and Zoom Meeting Room helped. Everyone who participated were encouraged and challenged in many ways. Some even mentioned that they do not want to read this book again! Others mentioned that this book was tough medicine – does not taste good, but is necessary. One thing I did notice is that we did not necessarily have members fully commit to all 8-weeks. There were some that missed a few weeks here and there. In addition, I think if there is a way to prevent that and have full commitment that can prove to be more beneficial with future studies. I yearn for the day where we can bring these book studies back in-person, but for now, Zoom will do. Thanks again for your support and I pray that we can continue to implement various communal learning opportunities for our church going forward.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. James Lee, *Lead Pastor*  
Christ Community Church (East Islip, NY.)



**MASSAPEQUA REFORMED CHURCH**  
RENEWING HEARTS. LIVES. LONG ISLAND.

## **FALL 2020 GRANT REPORT**

### **Just Show Up Book Study** *Counterfeit Gods* by Tim Keller

December 3, 2020

We are so very grateful for your generous support of our Just Show Up Book Club ministry initiative in collaboration with Christ Community Church of East Islip, NY (CRCNA).

#### **Introduction**

Through my brother, friend, and co-laborer Rev. James Lee of Christ Community, I was introduced to Charles Kim and the Grace & Mercy Foundation, as well as the Public Reading of Scripture and Just Show Up movements. I so appreciate the discipleship strategy of reading and listening to God's Word, reading and listening to the words of Christian classics, and doing so in a group setting that lets us listen and learn together. I've wanted to introduce these to my congregation for some time.

#### **Church Context**

Massapequa Reformed Church is a small Bible-based congregation affiliated with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). MRC was founded in 1963, and for many decades it was a church strong in numbers but light in doctrine. At peak membership there were about 450 members, but in the most recent decade the church dwindled to around 120 members. Seven years ago, I was installed as lead pastor, and we have been on an intentional journey of revitalization. It's been imperfect but grace filled. Our vision is to see hearts, lives, and communities transformed by the gospel. I pray that we are not only a faithful presence in our own community but that we faithfully partner with others to see Christ's kingdom move across all of Long Island.

#### **Summary**

After the first few weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, James and I decided to try a new collaboration that might provide encouragement for our congregations. We did a seven-week journey through Paul's prison letters using PRS together in April and May, meeting each Wednesday night via Zoom. We were blessed!

As 2020 continued to take its toll through pandemic, protests, presidential politics, and polarization, I sensed that our congregation was ready again for another round in the fall but thought it would be good to introduce JSU to my congregation.

I hoped that through communal listening and learning we would grow in faith, grow in fellowship, and be encouraged weekly as we seek to live and love like Jesus in such an anxious cultural moment.

After prayer and practical thinking, we decided to study Tim Keller's *Counterfeit Gods*, and this book could not have been a more appropriate and relevant study during the October to November time frame. As only the Lord's providence could provide, this book spoke profoundly and prophetically into our lives and into our cultural moment on a weekly basis.

As a result, it was a challenging study. Each week there was much that resonated with our deep-down soul longings and much that our hearts wanted to resist. We had around 20 people initially sign up to participate from MRC, but a handful of them did not make it to the end of the series. A handful of others were inconsistent in attendance.

We met each week on Zoom, together with Christ Community Church. It was a huge blessing to have two churches from two counties and from two denominations joining together. In a separate conversation about the possibility of doing a local fellowship event together in 2021 and "acting" like one church, one of my members replied, "we *are* one church!"

On many of the weeks we had a large group of 25-30 people on the Zoom session, so we took advantage of the breakout room to separate into two groups for some of the discussion time after listening to the chapter together. Our conversations about continued informally throughout the week, and one of the participants just emailed me an article last week that related to the idols of our hearts.

Using Zoom for this session of JSU was a great benefit to us. As our church has moved to provide online options this year in light of the pandemic, we have seen our reach expand with attendees from other states and even internationally at times. For JSU, it was a blessing to have my grandma and my wife's parents join us every week from Michigan, and one of our church members who was in Maine for the first few weeks was able to not miss those weeks.

One thing that I love about the JSU strategy of discipleship is that it is such an easy, non-intimidating way to get our congregants reading and engaging classics on Christian living—similar to how PRS is a non-intimidating way to get our people engaging God's Word more regularly.

We are so thankful for your generous support and I pray that we will have opportunities to partner again in the future.

Grace + Peace in Christ,

Rev. Joshua Scheid, Lead Pastor  
Massapequa Reformed Church