



The Importance of the 2026 Next STEPP Gala to the Church in advancing its mission.

WE NEED THE CHURCH AT THE TABLE

Why the Mission of Life Belongs to All of Us – and a Call to Action

The Stakes are High

Every day in our community, women and men face decisions that can change the course of a life—and sometimes generations of lives.

A woman discovers she is unexpectedly pregnant. She is frightened. She may feel alone. She may believe abortion is her only option.

A young man who is the father feels completely unprepared for that role. Or *wants* to step up to that role but needs help in finding a way to support and encourage the *mom* to choose life.

A couple is struggling under the pressures of an unintended pregnancy.

A mother needs a car seat, diapers, parenting support—or simply someone who will walk beside her when she feels she has nowhere else to turn.

Behind every one of these situations is a human being created in the image of God, deeply loved by Him.

This is why Next STEPP exists.

Through compassionate, life-affirming medical care, practical support, relationships, and the hope of the Gospel, Next STEPP comes alongside women, men, and families facing pregnancy and parenting challenges and helps them take the next step toward life and wholeness.

For more than three decades, thousands of people in our community have found help. Babies have been born. Families have been strengthened. Men have been engaged as fathers. Women have discovered that they are not alone.

But the need is growing. And meeting that need requires more than Next STEPP.

Something Much Bigger Is Happening

There is something much bigger happening here than the work of one nonprofit.

From the beginning, Scripture tells us that human beings bear the image of God.¹ Every woman. Every man. Every child. Every unborn child.²

And throughout Scripture, we see God's concern for those who are vulnerable, His defense of the voiceless, His command to pursue justice and mercy,³ and His desire to redeem what has been broken by sin.⁴

Few things in our generation have so directly assaulted God's purposes for His image-bearers as the destruction of unborn human life through abortion.⁵

This is not merely a political issue. It is not merely a cultural issue. And it is not simply a disagreement over competing ideas about when human life begins.

It is a spiritual battle over the value of human life, the glory of God, and the purposes of God for His image-bearers.

And it is happening in our generation on a staggering scale. But there is another reality we must not miss:

This battle is not simply taking place in the world. It is taking place in the Church.⁶

Abortion has touched our congregations. It has touched our families. It has touched our friends. There are women and men sitting in our churches today who carry the grief, shame, confusion, or wounds of abortion. There are others who have never been equipped to understand how the Gospel speaks into this part of their lives.

That means the Church cannot regard this as someone else's issue.⁷

This is our mission because these are our people.⁸

The Mission Belongs to the Church

Ultimately, however, this is our mission for an even deeper reason: **God's mission has been entrusted to His Church.⁹**

Christopher J. H. Wright expresses this truth beautifully:

"It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God's mission."

The Church does not need to invent a mission around life, human dignity, mercy, justice, family, redemption, and the Gospel.

God has already given us that mission.¹⁰

The Church is called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and to embody the transforming power of that Gospel in the world around us.

That means defending the vulnerable.

Welcoming the hurting.

Caring for women, men, and children.

Strengthening families.

Pursuing justice and mercy.

Speaking truth with compassion and love.

Offering forgiveness and healing.

And proclaiming the hope of redemption in Jesus Christ.

These aren't optional causes for Christians who happen to care about them. They are expressions of the mission God has entrusted to His people.¹¹

- Next STEPP does not own this mission.
- Next STEPP did not create it.

Next STEPP is an instrument through which the Church can live out a mission that already belongs to it.

That's why Next STEPP belongs to the Church—not because the Church owns Next STEPP, but because **the mission Next STEPP serves has been entrusted to the Church by God.**

And that changes the question. The question isn't simply:

“How much can our church afford to give to Next STEPP?”

The deeper question is: **“How is God calling our church to participate in His mission of life, redemption, mercy, and transformation in our community?”**

We Need the Whole Church

No single congregation can carry this mission alone. No single ministry can carry it alone.

And Next STEPP certainly cannot carry it alone.

We need the whole Church.

We need churches willing to pray.

Churches willing to speak.

Churches willing to serve.

Churches willing to welcome women, men, and families who are hurting.

Churches willing to engage fathers.

Churches willing to walk with people beyond the crisis.
And churches willing to invest the financial resources necessary to make all of this possible.

We don't need thirty churches merely to *support Next STEPP*.

We need thirty churches—and ultimately fifty, and a hundred—to recognize that this is something God has called His Church to do.

If we are truly the people of Jesus, this mission cannot be someone else's responsibility.
It is ours.¹²

The question is not whether the Church should be involved in creating a culture of life.
The question is what faithful involvement looks like for each of us.

Why the Gala Matters

That is why this year's Gala is about much more than raising money for Next STEPP.

It is an opportunity to gather the Church around the mission.

It is an opportunity to see what God is doing.
To hear the stories of lives being changed.
To understand the growing needs in our community.
To envision what could happen if more churches, more Christians, and more community partners stepped into this mission together.

And, yes, it is an opportunity to provide the financial resources necessary to advance the work.¹³

Because vision without resources remains only a vision.

The Gala is one of our greatest opportunities each year to move people from awareness to engagement—and from engagement to partnership.

That is why we want every Life-Affirming Partnering Church represented.

Not simply because we need another table filled;

Because we need the Church at the table.

We want pastors, leaders, families, and members of our congregations to see this mission as part of the mission God has already given us.

We want churches to leave the Gala saying:

“This is our community. These are our neighbors. This is our mission. And we want to be part of what God is doing.”

From One Generation to the Next

Our 2026 Gala theme is *PASS ON THE GIFT OF LIFE—From One Generation to the Next*.

That isn't merely a theme. **It is a calling.**

We have inherited the mission of life from those who came before us. Now we have the responsibility to carry it forward—to the next generation of parents, the next generation of children, and the next generation of the Church.

If we want to see a culture of life take root in our community, **the Church must lead the way.**¹³

And if we are going to fulfill that calling, we need every congregation committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to step forward.

So we are asking your church to come to the table.

Host a table. Bring your people. Hear the stories. See the need. Catch the vision. Invest in the mission.

Not simply to support Next STEPP.

But to stand with your brothers and sisters in Christ and say:

“This is our mission.”

“These are our neighbors.”

“These lives matter.”

“And we are in this together.”

Let's gather the Church. Let's strengthen the mission.

Let's pass it on—from one generation to the next.

NOTES:

1. **Genesis 1:26–27**, Created in the image of God. **Genesis 9:6** Whoever sheds blood shall be judged for God made man in his image.
2. **Psalm 139:13–16**, God knows and forms us in the womb. **Jeremiah 1:5**; God's knowledge and calling precede birth. **Luke 1:39–44** The unborn John responds to the presence of the unborn Jesus.

3. **Micah 6:8**, Do Justice, Love Kindness. **Proverbs 24:11**, Rescue those being taken away to death. **Proverbs 31:8–9** Speak for those unable to speak for themselves—defend their rights. **Isaiah 1:17** Bring justice to the fatherless. **James 1:27** True religion – to visit orphans and widows in their affliction. **Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 32:35 & elsewhere**, God detests the abominable practice of child sacrifice, and judged his people and the nations for it.
4. **Luke 4:18**, Good news to the poor, set at liberty those who are oppressed. **Matt. 12:20**, A bruised reed he will not break. **Luke 5:32**, Jesus came to rescue sinners. **Luke 19:10**, The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. **Matt 9:13**, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.
5. **Genesis 1:28**, And God blessed them and said “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...” **John 10:10**, The thief comes to kill and steal and destroy. **John 8:44**, Satan is a murderer and liar from the beginning. **Genesis 3:4**, The serpent said, “you shall not surely die.” Since 1973, over 70 million babies have been killed by abortion in America, and over one billion worldwide. Over 50 thousand unborn babies were killed in Florida in 2025, and 1 thousand in St. Petersburg.
6. Statistics tell us that one in four women in America has experienced abortion. They also tell us that 40% of those women were attending church at the time of their first abortion—meaning that women in the church have experienced abortion at about the same rate as unchurched women. Two out of ten women on average in the church have experienced abortion. And for every woman, there’s a man, and parents, future husband and siblings of the aborted child. This means that this issue is not merely outside the Church. It is among us. It affects people we worship beside, serve beside, and love. Every pastor and church leader needs to be aware of this. Before we can bring God's life and restoration to the world, we want to minister His mercy and restoration to one another.
7. You did it to me. **Proverbs 24:12** If you say, behold, we did not know this, does not he who weighs the heart perceive this?
8. **Luke 10:29-37**, But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, who is my neighbor?—the Samaritan who showed mercy proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers.
9. **Matt 16:18**, The gates of hell shall not prevail against his church. **Matt. 28:18**, All authority in heaven & earth given to me, go therefore... making disciples and teaching them to obey all I have commanded.
10. **Luke 4:18**, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to set at liberty those who are oppressed. **John 20:21**, As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. **Matt. 7:21**, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord... but those who do the will of my Father..
11. **Matthew 25:40**, As you did it to one of the least of these...
12. **Matt. 5:13-16**, You (the Church) are the salt of the earth, the light of the world... Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.