

“Standing on the Rock ... in Faith, Hope, and Grace”

Isaiah 26.4; 1 Corinthians 3.11; 1 Corinthians 10.4; Luke 6.47-49

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Mason, Michigan

September 17, 2017

There were some who said we couldn't do it. A hundred and eighteen years ago, when plans were forming for the construction of this church building, there were some who said we couldn't build it out of stone. Brick, yes. But stone – that would be too difficult, too complicated, too *expensive*.

Others said, *yes, we can*. Trusting in faith, confident in hope, relying on grace, *standing on the Rock that is Jesus Christ*, this congregation aimed high and set itself to the challenge. And the stones came in. Hauled out of the fields from farmland surrounding Mason, drawn here by horses, cut here on site, the stones came. Here we are now, more than a century later, still benefiting from the decision that was made then, still grateful for the hard work our forebears in these pews went to.

There were some who said we couldn't do it. Fifty-eight years ago, when plans were forming for the addition of the education wing, there were some who said it wasn't possible. Too difficult. Too complicated. Too expensive. Others said, *yes, we can*. Trusting in faith, confident in hope, relying on grace, *standing on the Rock that is Jesus Christ*, this congregation aimed high and set itself to the challenge. And the money came in. The most significant capital campaign ever conducted by this church – to *that* point – and it was hugely successful. Classrooms, library, nursery, kitchenette, rooms we use week in and week out. Here we are now, more than half a century later, still benefiting from the decision that was made then, still grateful for the hard work our forebears in these pews went to.

There were some who said we couldn't do it. Maybe some of *you* thought we couldn't do it. Over the last decade, as plans were forming for the renovation of this historic stone building and the addition of air conditioning and an elevator, there were some who didn't think it was possible. Too difficult. Too complicated. Too expensive. Our original plans were for a 2.4 million dollar renovation. We scaled down the project, aiming for about \$1.5 million, and still there were some who said, “There's no way we can pull this off. This isn't going to happen.” Even some of the local banks thought this endeavor was too risky. Three years ago we set an ambitious goal: to raise \$900,000 by the end of 2017. Today, right now, this very moment, we are exactly \$100 shy of that goal, and we're still expecting tens of thousands more dollars to come in between now and the rest of the year. Trusting in faith, confident in hope, relying on grace, *standing on the Rock that is Jesus Christ*, we dug deep, and we blew out of the water *everyone's* hopes and expectations, raising more than three times our annual operating budget in just three years. As capital campaigns go, if you raise *two* times your annual operating budget, you've

done well. Two and a half times, and you've done *fantastically* well. *Three* times – that's practically unheard of. Pastors of other churches have called me – some of them more than once – to ask: "How did you all do it?" There's the practical answer to that question – we had excellent coaching, we had an exceptionally strong Finance Committee, we trained people to go out two by two and talk with every member of this congregation, we contacted every friend of this church that we could possibly get ahold of, we *prayed* (hard!), we *stretched* (long!), and we flourished. That's the practical answer. But there's also the *spiritual* answer: *we trusted in Jesus Christ, the Rock of our salvation.*

It's time to do it again. Ultimately the project cost us about 1.65 million dollars; we've raised \$900,000 so far; there's a \$750,000 difference, plus the interest we already paid on the construction loan, and the interest we have yet to pay over the course of the next 20 years. We're paying over \$5,200 every single month in mortgage payments; that's more than ten times what I pay on my mortgage at home; it adds up to over \$62,000 a year, for twenty years, *on top of* what we spent last year. It's a *lot* of money! We don't want to have to pay that much interest, nor do we want to be saddled with this mortgage for the next 20 years of our life. So we are launching a second capital campaign that will run from the beginning of 2018 to the end of 2020. The goal this time is to raise \$650,000 over the next three years, *on top of* our regular annual operating budget. That's not as ambitious a goal as the \$900,000 goal we had for the *first* capital campaign, nor is it enough to completely pay off the mortgage. But it's enough to make *huge* progress forward.

It's time, once again, for this congregation to aim high and set ourselves to the challenge. It's time, once again, to *stand on the Rock* that is Jesus Christ, trusting in faith, confident in hope, relying on grace. Peter is going to give us some more details about how, with God's help, we are going to do this....

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Let us pray....

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