



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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October 28, 2008

Re: An Occasional Letter to All Elders – Fall, 2008

Dear Elder:

FINANCES

GENERAL BUDGET: The most common question that I am asked is “How is the economy affecting the church?” Total receipts to the General Fund through the third quarter were \$739,499 against operating expenses of \$755,082 (leaving a net loss of \$15,583). Total receipts through the same period last year were \$725,506 (with a net loss of \$24,172). In a *normal year*, because the fourth quarter is historically a very strong quarter, we would be cautiously optimistic. But this is not a *normal year*. The Finance Committee is concerned that the anxiety about the United States and world economy is now beginning to affect our church offerings (October gifting to the church has seen a marked decline from the same period last year). The Finance Committee will continue to monitor the situation and will keep the congregation apprised through weekly bulletin updates.

LIVING FAITH (BUILDING): Through the third quarter we received pledges of \$689,355 against three-year pledges of \$1,702,636. To date we have drawn a \$589,623 loan against our line of credit. Given our economy, it is difficult to make projections as to how quickly pledges will be paid, how many new pledges will be forthcoming, and how the new Faith Center, when it comes on line, will impact the general budget. For this reason the Session and the **Associate Pastor Nominating Committee** have agreed to put on hold the calling of a new associate pastor until such time as we can make a more informed financial forecast. The delay will continue through the January 2009 Session meeting when it will be reviewed. Also, please ‘save the date’ — we have scheduled an appreciation dinner for Tuesday, January 13, 2009, to thank all of those who have made pledges to Living Faith. As ever, we covet your financial leadership in the church! For your information, below is our mid-October projection of the

ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS FOR COMPLETION OF LIVING FAITH:

PROJECT COST TO COMPLETE PHASE II:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Contract Amount Remaining | \$1.59 M |
| Soft Costs Remaining | .28 M |
| Contingency Costs Remaining | <u>.05 M</u> |
| Total Projected Costs Remaining | <u>\$1.92 M</u> |

FUNDING — LIVING FAITH:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Pledges To Be Received | \$1.00 M |
| Cash Available In Account | <u>.11 M</u> |
| Total | <u>\$1.11 M</u> |

POTENTIAL FINANCING REQUIREMENTS:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Costs Remaining Minus Funding | \$ 800 K |
| Already Financed (Loan Outstanding) | \$ <u>590 K</u> |
| Total Financing Required | <u>\$1.39 M</u> |

FAITH CENTER (CHRISTIAN LIFE CENTER):

We can report that construction is on schedule, that we have a very cordial relationship with our general contractor (Taylor-Pansing), and that we continue to anticipate completion before Easter, 2009. You may remember the Faith Center is Phase II of a three-phase program. Phase I involved the acquisition of properties and the building of new parking areas. Phase III will expand and renovate the Sanctuary and the existing Fellowship Hall. Again, the Session showed prudence in separating Phase II and Phase III therefore putting us in a “pay as you go” situation (rather than combining both phases and securing a large mortgage). We will significantly reduce/eliminate the debt from Phase II before moving on to Phase III.

4-MANUAL ALLEN ORGAN:

We are also pleased that the **new 4-manual Allen organ** is now in the final stages of being built. The organ is scheduled for completion and shipment to Faith in late December — installation is scheduled for January, 2009.

Diane Bish, one of America’s most accomplished organists, will give the dedicatory recital on February 6, 2009. Because of Ms. Bish’s popularity, only 600 tickets will be printed and be available, at no charge, first to members of Faith (who may secure their tickets in the church office beginning December 1) and then if tickets are still available, to the community beginning January 15, 2009.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

A few years ago some of you who are long-time members will remember that Faith was an exciting and vibrant 1,000 member church. We could have continued to do church as we had always done it in the past, remained a strong 1,000 member church and then, gradually, begin a cycle of slow decline. At the same time, however, the community was growing, and we believed that God was challenging us to be a church home to those who were moving into the community.

Growth, however, is never guaranteed, and it never comes without a price. Very few churches (less than 200 out of 10,500 Presbyterian Churches) grow to have 1,250 members. To do so we were challenged to ‘unlearn’ or ‘unfreeze’ being a 1,000 member church and venture out in faith. We began a new 9:30 “informal” worship service. We added full-time Directors for Education/Youth and Business. We added to the church debt in order to purchase properties for further expansion. In time, Faith became a strong and vibrant 1,250 member church.

And we could have stopped growing but for the gospel’s demand to ‘go ye into the world.’ Southwest Florida was still growing, and people still yearned for a church with the joy, friendliness and encouragement of Faith. We challenged ourselves again. We launched an ambitious three-year Building Faith program followed by a new three-year Living Faith

campaign. We created another full-time staff position, Director of Congregational Life. Only 100 Presbyterian Churches USA grow to become a 1,500 member church. It is difficult. The staff had to unfreeze again, adapt to new realities, learn new skills, and to figure out how we could become a vibrant and effective 1,500 member church. Today we have made that successful transition and are a healthy, functional, caring, and outgoing congregation.

Since things are going well, the temptation is to once again ‘freeze’ and keep doing what we have been doing. We know from the collective experience of other churches, however, that if we ‘stay as we are’ people may continue to come in the front door but just as many will leave through the back door. In time, we will begin the slow death that affects every mature church that is content with “things as they are.” We are challenged to move boldly ahead or to begin a slow dance of decline.

We believe that God continues to call us to be a church of hospitality — to be a church home to all who God sends to us. It means, elders, that we cannot freeze, we must stay flexible and fluid. It also means that with the new Faith Center coming on line next year, more and more people will be attracted to our wonderful facilities, our warm and caring congregation, and the very capable ministry of our professional and lay staff.

Where is God calling us? How might we adapt to this exciting time in which we find ourselves? Here are my thoughts:

FAITH CENTER: Our congregation will use the Center in many ways — for needed space for Tuesday Night dinners, classrooms and youth programming. The gymnasium will offer new space for basketball, volleyball, aerobics, exercise classes, etc. Once we fully determine what Faith’s needs are for the Center, we can use the building as an outreach to the community. For example, another church in a similar situation opened their gym on Saturday mornings for ‘biddy basketball’ (free basketball instruction for all the children of the community). And do you know what happened? When the children had a positive experience at the church on Saturdays, they asked their parents if they could come back on Sunday for Sunday School ... the church, through its basketball outreach, became the home to dozens and dozens of new young families. In a word — if you build it, they will come.

Growth challenges us to do things in new ways. **The 9:30 a.m. worship service has outgrown the sanctuary.** We know that when a worship space is 80% full, attendance will stop growing. Therefore, in the summer of 2009 the 9:30 a.m. service will be moved to the Faith Center. I believe the advantages are obvious:

- **SPACE** — Room to grow, space to bring more people/families to Christ.
- **PARKING** — Encouraging 9:30 a.m. worshippers to park in the south lot will open more parking spaces near the sanctuary for 11:00 a.m. worshippers.
- **TURN-OVER TIME** — Having three services in the Sanctuary on Sunday morning is constraining. With the change, the three services will not need to be rushed in order to ‘turn over the parking lot.’
- **FAMILIES IN ONE BUILDING** — Families coming to Faith the first time (to the 9:30 a.m. service) will find that worship, Sunday School, and the nursery are all in one building.

Will there be adjustments? Will it feel 'different' at first? Of course. But to be faithful we cannot freeze; we will make this transition, and it will be a godsend to many, many people who do not now have a church home.

WEDNESDAY, 12:15 P.M. MID-WEEK SERVICE: You may remember that several years ago we had a mid-week 'Service of Wholeness.' It was a contemplative service; people could voice their prayer concerns, seek the wholeness and healing of God for themselves and others, and have their spiritual lives supported and challenged by the weekly celebration of The Lord's Supper. We are pleased to announce that we will resume this service next month starting *December 3, each Wednesday, at 12:15 p.m. in Hunt Chapel.* The Service of Wholeness will be important for people who may work on Sunday, who may take medications that make mornings difficult to get up and get going, to those who want a mid-week service, and all others who are seeking the hope and healing of the Gospel. You are invited to join us at our first service, Wednesday, December 3, at 12:15 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS: As with any family, communications are vital. To this end we have begun *Faith Focus.* The goal of the *Focus* is to allow me to communicate weekly with all of our friends and members (even when they are on vacation or away for the summer) so that I can share something of the struggle/joy of being Christian in our culture. Faith Focus also includes news of the church and often a word about the mission/news of the larger 'body of Christ.' (If you are not receiving the Focus, please send me an e-mail at tim@faithcapecoral.org or if you do not have a computer, you may pick up a copy each week at the Visitor Center).


BOARD OF DEACONS: Several years ago we added 'neighborhoods' to the responsibility of our deacons. We realized that in a growing church for purposes of communication and care, these neighborhoods are important. In order to meet the continuing growth needs of the congregation, the deacons have asked that the Board of Deacons be increased in size from 27 to 33 deacons. Session requests the congregation vote to concur at the November 9th Congregational Meeting.

MISSION: Simply put, the more hands we have, the more we can accomplish. In recent years the Mission Committee has made a concerted effort to make Faith a hands-on mission church (rather than doing missions via the checkbook). There are wonderful opportunities available to those whose health and time allow — from our We Care Food Ministry, to building a home for Habitat for Humanity, to serving food to farm workers in Immokalee. Check out the church web site (www.faithcapecoral.org) to learn more.

Elders, the journey continues! This is an exciting time to be a part of the Faith community. Thank you for your gifts of time, talent and treasure. Please know that being your pastor is both the joy and honor of my life.

To God be the glory!

In Faith, your pastor and friend,



Tim Halverson

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