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*“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21.*

Dear Friends,

July 11, 2008

How wonderfully true it is that our God does far more abundantly than all that we could ever ask or think! I have been looking forward now for some time to sharing with you all about what He has been doing these last 3 months, and now that our situation has ‘settled-down’ somewhat, I am able to do so with some certainty. It is my hope that, as I share our story with you, you will be encouraged in seeing how marvelous the works of God are as “He treasures up His bright designs and works His sovereign will.”

Last Fall, as Kristine and I sat with our two Ruling Elders and two Deacons and their wives at a leadership planning session, it became apparent to all of us that we needed to press for the purchase of a building, a visible and permanent presence in our community, in 2008. As we began to look for buildings, the cost of a facility for the church was staggering: ranging from \$970,000 for a 2000 square foot former Friendly’s restaurant to \$400,000 for a dilapidated church building with no parking. We were discouraged by this initial response to our need but we had begun praying and were confident that God would provide in some way.

One day our realtor sent along notification for the sale of an old church building which was in East Longmeadow, MA. that was outside of the city limits of Springfield. In truth, I had rejected the opportunity to look at this building almost a year previously, but at this point I reconsidered the opportunity by reasoning that it was at least worth a look so that we could compare value on future properties. And so, on a Saturday morning, I met our elders and deacons there in order to get a look. After much discussion, we felt that this represented an affordable opportunity and decided that we would pursue it as far as God was willing to permit us.

This building had limited parking and needed roughly \$50,000 immediately in repairs and would need a complete makeover eventually, but the price was \$300,000 and could be negotiated. We held a congregational meeting, approved our corporate structure, and set a date for holding another congregational meeting in the facility itself while seeking a congregational vote on the purchase, and began taking steps to obtain funding. Our realtor called us the night before the much-anticipated congregational meeting at the

facility, to tell us that the building was being negotiated for purchase by a Buddhist group and was no longer available. We were crushed!

Two days later, on February 28<sup>th</sup>, just before a teacher training session in our home, I received a phone call from an individual who had heard a 'sermonette' of mine on the radio, and she was asking if I was looking for a church. I had recorded what was called 'Bread of Life' 5-minute messages for a radio station out of Weathersfield, CT 2 months before and they had just been running those messages over that week during the 'commuter hour.' She had happened to hear one in which I was preaching from Matthew's gospel on the subject of the value of service for Christ and of Christ's protection and nurture for His Church. She and her husband were encouraged by this and knelt to pray that evening about whether or not they should contact me, thinking that, through a misrepresentation by an error at the radio station, I was a pastor without a 'call.' When we spoke, I answered that I was not seeking another call and, while explaining my church-planting situation to her, told her that we were searching for a building location, to which she responded, "We HAVE a building and are in need of a pastor, would you like to see it?" I did not know where this would go, but answered that I would love to meet them and would be interested in talking with them and so we made the appointment to do so.

Norman Bertera, a recently ordained Ruling Elder, and I went to that appointment with much prayer, not knowing what the Lord was doing. In the 4 months since, God has made His will clear. The building, it turns out, was a beautiful General Steel building which was only 16 months old and located just over the line from Longmeadow, MA in Enfield, CT. It sits on 13 acres in the middle of a huge swath of residential homes and condominiums, has a 290 person capacity sanctuary (currently comfortable with 100 chairs), a church office, 3 class rooms, a nursery, a future kitchen, a small 'fellowship hall', and a 40-car capacity paved parking lot. We were initially troubled by the location, being in Enfield, CT, but realized that the people living in the area are working in greater Springfield, and that the building was only 5.5 miles from our worship location in the cafeteria of the private Christian school that we have been using for the last 4 years.

The husband and wife that we met with that evening had brought another couple from the church, Grace Chapel Community Church, and they all began sharing with us the struggles that they had gone through over the 6 years of their existence. They had sought to plant a non-denominational church for the greater Springfield community, had struggled to hold the church together after having gone through various struggles, now were without a pastor and the two families which we were meeting with comprised half of the churches committed families.

In the following weeks, we began leading them through our theological and confessional commitments, explained what the PCA is (they had already read, upon my suggestion, through the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Book of Church Order online and professed themselves in agreement with both documents), and began to get to know their church 'culture' and history, and they ours. Since that time, their remaining congregation has voted unanimously to submit to our leadership, accept me as their Pastor, to join and

be received by our congregation, accept our Presbyterian system of government, our creedal commitments and confessional statements, etc... The Springfield Presbyterian Church congregation has also unanimously voted to receive these men and women into our church and their building.

These actions have resulted in Springfield Presbyterian Church now growing in number and, by God's wonderful grace, having a permanent place of worship and ministry. The equity of \$400,000+ in the land and the already paid portion of the mortgage have been gifted to us as these families became part of the church. All of the assets of the church have also been gifted to us: sound system, sanctuary furniture, chairs, grand piano, desks, tables, etc... We have now been worshipping together as a complete congregation for 2 months and God has blessed and renewed both congregations by forming us into one body through "...the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph 4:3b.

The part of this wonderful blessing for which we most need your ongoing prayers and support is that while we have been given a tremendous opportunity of God's provision, we are now obligated for the outstanding and ongoing costs as well. The outstanding mortgage cost is \$489,000 and the monthly building obligation, mortgage payment and utilities, is \$5000. In order to keep this building, we will need to raise \$120,000 in order to be able to pay this mortgage and the building costs in the short-term, while giving us time to grow. We are glad to be able to report that, by means of internal fund-raising through pledges and allocation of funds, we are already \$55,000 of our way toward the goal, leaving \$65,000 as our remaining need. Would you consider helping us with this one-time giving need? We have included addressed envelopes and pledge cards if you are able to help us. Your support will be set apart for the building cost. We would also ask you to pray that by God's wondrous provision we might be relieved entirely of the mortgage cost, if He is willing.

We have already begun reaching out into the surrounding community and have seen God's blessing. We held an advertised 'Visitor Sunday' and had 33 visitors with us on that Sunday morning, a number of which have remained. Our Wednesday evening Bible studies were divided into two and we have 3 non-Christian families attending on a consistent basis. We continue to see a steady stream of visitors on Sunday mornings at worship now and our new families are overjoyed to see an active ministry and vibrant vision for the kingdom of God in their leadership.

I plead with you to pray for us. The Lord is making it abundantly clear that we must trust Him to provide. We are absolutely dependent upon Him, as we always have been, only we are far more aware of it now that our need is so great and the stakes are so very high. I am pleased to say though that we have found Him to be faithful always and a very present help in time of need. Praise the Lord with us for His amazing provision and pray with us for His continued care.

Always grateful in the Lord for you,