



RECTOR'S REPORT

Jamie Brown | 3.10.24

Psalms 127:1 says that *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."*

And I'm more convinced than ever that the Lord is building his house here.

As we look back, and look ahead, there are so many reasons for us as a church to praise God. Really! Praise God for his faithfulness to us. For his provision. For leading us forward. For building us together as a church upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that *"no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"*. And because that's true, let me remind us all of what we're all about. I hope you know these things, and I hope you hear me say these things so often that you start to say them yourself!

What we're all about is **celebrating and proclaiming the good news of the gospel**. Jesus holds all things together, and that's really good news. And that's why we're here as a church. To celebrate and proclaim this good news.

And with that focus – and upon that foundation – the Lord is building his house here. And the house has four main pillars. **The Word, worship, community, and outreach**. And praise God, those pillars are strong and sturdy. But they're only strong and sturdy because they're anchored to the foundation of Christ.

I shared with you a year ago, that as far as I can discern, the Lord has called me to minister here for the long haul. And that thrills me. I've told you that I feel called to serve here for at least 30 years. And I'm sticking with that number! There's nowhere else on earth I'd rather be. There's no other church I'd rather serve. I love this church. And I love what God is doing in and through this church. And I'm confident in the vision he's given us.

I also shared with you a year ago that I can best summarize that vision with "three Rs". **Restore, rebuild, and raise-up**. God's heart for his people is to restore them, rebuild them, and raise them up. We hear in Isaiah 58:11 that *"the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail"*.

Now in the next verse listen for the three Rs. Isaiah 58:12: *"And your ancient ruins shall be **rebuilt**; you shall **raise up** the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the **restorer** of streets to dwell in"*.

Restore. Rebuild. Raise-up. This is our vision, this is our prayer, and this is our task:

To step out into the vision. It's one thing to have a vision. It's another thing to step out into it.

This vision of restoration, rebuilding, and raising up is like a long road that God has laid out before us. I'm not going to come to you every year with a different vision of a different road I think God has asked us to take. God has identified the road. It's a long road, with different turns, and stops and starts, and different speeds, and mile markers. But God has laid out the course before us. And he's also laid out a challenge before us.

To have confidence in the vision he's given – and **step out into it**. This is what I'm focused on. And this is what your clergy and staff and vestry are focused on.

On one side of the coin: to tend to the health and the foundations of this church. While on the other side of the coin: to move forward into a new chapter for this church. The two sides of this coin help make sure we move into a new chapter without moving on from the foundations. We spend a lot of time as clergy, staff, and vestry, focused on these two sides of the same coin. Standing firm, *and* stepping out.

In other words, commitment to the fundamentals without contentment with the status quo. Fundamentals first – and then we advance. This is the order that Jesus taught us. Matthew 6:33: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

As a church, and as clergy, staff, and vestry, we *could* focus on the "things" that we'd like to see added to us first: programs, ministries, growth... But those "things" must come as a result of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Let me apply that principle in my remaining minutes to one elephant in the room, which is this room and this property itself. This property doesn't currently belong to us. It belongs to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. We remain on this property, rent-free, with a commitment to the care and upkeep of the campus, until 2037. On the one hand, 2037 is a long way away. On the other hand, it's not a long way away at all.

We'd all like to have certainty – soon! – about our ownership of this property, not just for the sake of this generation, but for generations to come. I have no doubt that we will own this property one day soon. And your clergy, staff, and vestry leadership here has real confidence in the vision God has given us for this campus of significant restoration and rebuilding. And we desire to step out into that vision for this campus. So, our first step of faith is to get down on our knees.

Over the next several months and years, I'll have more to share with you about all of this. There are already some very encouraging signs that I can't report to you yet, but I will when I can. For now, I mean this, please pray.

But while I'm on this topic, I do want to circle back to something Nancy raised earlier, which is this room itself. This sanctuary. A holy, sacred, set-apart place of gathering and worship.

I love this room. Catherine and I were married in this room 18 years ago. And 18 years ago – and for the most part, 40 years ago – it had the same flooring, the same paint, the same lighting, the old pew cushions that eventually disintegrated, and did I mention the same flooring?

Sometimes I'm nervous about reading Psalm 121 in this building. "I lift my eyes up..." Or maybe I shouldn't lift my eyes up.

I'm confident in the vision God has given us for what he's going to do in and through this sanctuary. So, I *would* like to challenge us as a congregation to step into the new chapter he's writing for this church by renewing and renovating this space. More and more people are going to come into this sanctuary in the years to come. We need to be ready for them.

We have \$60,000 budgeted for sanctuary renewal, but to do everything well, it will probably take four times that amount. I would like to challenge the Truro congregation, because I believe we can cover this. If you are able to give a significant financial gift, over and above your regular giving, please do so today. You can give a special one-time gift in the plates tonight, or online. When you click on "Give", there is a special drop-down option for "Sanctuary Renewal". Truro, if we decide to do this, then we could renew this Sanctuary in one fell swoop this summer. It could feel new again! This room could become an inhabitable demonstration of the new thing God is doing in this church.

God is calling us to dream again. He's calling us to step out again. Into the work of restoration, and rebuilding, and raising up. Here in this room, and on this campus, and far beyond.

We stepped into this vision this past August when we sent 60-70 people out to Burke, and as I said on that Sunday, it was terrifying! But God is faithful. Since the end of August, we've seen another 70 people begin worshipping with us, and then another 20-30 on top of that. It was terrifying to step out in faith, but praise God for leading us to do it. He gave the vision, he placed the call, he led his people, and so he gets the glory.

Remember, that just outside these doors, the fields are white for harvest. And I believe with all my heart that the day of the harvest is now. God has called this church to celebrate and proclaim the good news of the gospel for the sake of the people all around us who desperately need Jesus.

So, let's dream bold dreams again. Let's pray bold prayers again. Let's step out into the vision. Not for our sake, but for the sake of those who will soon join us. For those who will come after us. And for the sake of the lost. Let's step out, not in our power, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. And not for our glory, but for the glory of God alone.

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)