

A Note on Faith

Whenever you embark on a big project, it's always right to start with prayer and discernment together. Then, if you feel called to step out, inevitably things will happen along the way that challenge, or increase your faith.

There are several times when we've had to delay this project, and those things felt really discouraging at the time. For example, we were just about to launch right before the pandemic struck. But it really feels as though the time is right at last and six specific things have happened to raise the level of our faith.

One: Discovery

The first was our discovery of the plans of three previous generations including the original congregation that planted our church. Their understand of their problems were astonishingly similar to our own, which means we are probably on the right track.

Two: Review

The second was a review of the Vestry retreat from nine years ago. They dreamed a radical 20-year vision for our church, which at the time seemed fantastically wild. Unbelievably the Lord has done almost every one of those things already, with one significant and consistent exception: fix the building. If He has been faithful about all those other things, why not this?

Three: Commitment

The third was the commitment of the leadership team. Every member of the vestry has agreed to the principle of sacrificial giving and has gladly said that they will be supporting the project financially in addition to their regular giving.

Four: Keystone Gift

Fourth was the fact that just a few days before the vestry met to begin a discussion back in 2019, a member of the church, gave a substantial sum for the purposes of building something new even though they knew none of the details: they simply gave in faith having felt led by the Lord. Of course, the pandemic put many of our plans on hold, and we had to pivot, but that gift funded much of the cost of the Meeting House, which is now used almost every day of the week. We believe this was the first fruits of a moment for us all and now we have a great example, in that building, of what we can achieve in the sanctuary and the hall. It is also no exaggeration to say that what we learned over there on that smaller project has enabled us to halve the cost of what we'd like to achieve in the main building.

Five: Godly Coincidences

Fifth, throughout the bidding process, the Lord has frequently brought the right people to us at just the right time, sometimes completely by surprise. For example, our window contractor is a believer who we met working on a property nearby. Not only is he an expert in installing architectural windows into historic properties like ours, but he is also keen to help gospel-driven churches and is willing to supply all the units to us at cost, saving us nearly \$200,000 over what we were expecting to pay. On another occasion, we received a message out of the blue from a Christian carpet installer, addressed to our previous organist Clark. We have no idea how they got his details, and neither did the company, but when we opened the envelope, it contained a piece of beautiful red carpet and a letter telling us they had managed to source a large quantity and could offer what was left over at about half the price we were expecting to pay. As we got to know them and explore the details, it turned out that they worship in the same chapel that our diocese uses for its annual clergy retreat and so again they are fellow believers who care about our church.

Six: Growth

Sixth, we are emerging from the worst crisis in the history of our church and yet we have grown in every generation. Since the pandemic began, 85 new members have officially joined, and we have similar numbers in our Service Team and over 100 in our small groups. The average church has shrunk by 35% since the pandemic began, but we are almost back to where we were, albeit stronger, more committed, more connected, and with everyone keen to contribute to life in our body.

We should be amazed at what the Lord is doing here. By grace, we're thriving, so we believe it's time to build.