



ELIZABETHTOWN
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

PRACTICING PEACE, SERVICE AND OPENNESS TO ALL

Second Sunday of Lent
Capital Campaign Halftime
Running the Race

2 Timothy 4.6–8

By Pastor Greg Davidson Laszakovits
Message from March 17, 2019

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2 TIMOTHY 4.6–8

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As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

In these words, said to be written by Paul, but perhaps by one of his colleagues echoing his life of faith, the message is clear: true and lasting satisfaction in life is found when you do your very best for God and neighbor. When you've given it everything you've got and can say, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

Isn't that what we all want to be able to say at the end each and every day? Or career? Or life? To look back with sense of contentment and say, *I did my best no matter what blessing or hardship was placed before me. I did my best for God, for my family, for my neighbor.*

There are probably a lot of factors that would go into this kind of contentment. One of the biggest factors is whether or not we meet our responsibilities.

There's a joke about a man who was interviewing for a job.

The interviewer said, "In this job we need someone who is responsible."

"I'm the one you want," the man replied. "At my last job, every time anything went wrong, they always said I was the one who was responsible."

That's obviously the opposite of what we want people to say about us. So we must sit down and ask ourselves: to what and to whom am I responsible? For most of us we probably think right away of family. What is my responsibility as a parent or spouse? But also as a sibling, a cousin, a grandchild. A grandparent. Most of us would say that a big part of our responsibility is to provide an environment where our family will not just survive, but grow and thrive.

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In this community of faith, as followers of Jesus, we know that it doesn't stop with family. We also have a responsibility to our neighbor. Especially those who are vulnerable. And, last but certainly not least, we are responsible to God, recognizing God makes it all possible.

God is the ground of our being. Biblical scholar Matt Skinner says "Throughout the letter [of 2 Timothy], Paul has been the example to imitate. But it has been the Lord who makes such faithfulness possible. The Lord makes perseverance a reality....The people Timothy and Paul serve are not their own, but the Lord's."

In this light we begin to see that our responsibilities are not just responsibilities, they have a higher calling. As a congregation we practice peace, service and openness to all, not only because it is our responsibility but because it is our calling from God.

We preach sermons that are challenging or might step on toes because it is our responsibility. We pastors risk our credentials/ordinations not because it is comfortable or easy, but because it is our calling. Not just for the church of today, but for the church of the future.

We stick our necks out because it is our calling and responsibility. This congregation has done some brave things over the years not because they were easy, but because we were called. Because we had a responsibility. We preach peace in times of war, provide sanctuary to the vulnerable, moved to this building from a smaller facility on Washington Street. We name proudly and publicly our openness to all. We serve in our communities nearby and around the world in times of day-to-day need and disaster. We serve because it is our calling.

We are embarking on a building project, and a capital campaign to support that project, because we feel both a responsibility and a calling. To God. To those who came before us and had the vision to start this congregation, then moved from a comfortable spot on Washington Street to this location,

doubling or tripling its ministry. Looking back at the church records it was a very close vote on whether or not to build this building. Here we are 60-some years later and I have never heard anybody say “Gee, I sure wish we were still in the Washington Street building.”

Do we have the audacity to seek to double or triple our ministry now? No wait! Do we have a responsibility to double or triple ministry now? Do we have a calling to double or triple our ministry now? Can you imagine the number of service hours double or tripled? Witness to the world doubled or tripled? Outreach donations doubled or tripled? Multiplying our ministry means the world that will receive the more ministry that flows from this place and more lives will be changed.

We have a responsibility and a calling to give to future generations who will worship and minister here, and beyond these walls. We just installed a portable classroom set up outside because we do not have space for classes to meet. We had 20 adults (+kids) in our last welcome lunch with pastors. Which means we will probably have the biggest Inquirers’ class since any of the current pastoral staff has been here. But here’s the rub. Our building cannot sustain this level of growth. It is not a question of whether or not this building will be expanded and renovated, but a question of whether or not we will take the responsibility to do it, or pass the task to a future generation.

I want to share the paraphrase of a conversation with a couple who have been part of this congregation for many years. When sharing with me about their campaign pledge they put it this way *“this congregation was a place of refuge for us some 45 years ago, it was a place that preached the gospel boldly and differently from what we were seeing all around us. It became our church home and we raised our kids and our grandkids here. And we realized that we experienced this blessing because of the building that was here, that the people who came before us had built. And the more we talked about this project the more excited we became realizing that it was not just an obligation to for us to contribute to the congregation that has given us so much, but a BLESSING that we can*

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pass forward to generations to come, who were just like us 45 years ago."

Well, Donna and Don, how are we doing?



REACHING OUT

- 311 Homes Contacted
- 900+ Letters Mailed
- 300+ Phone Calls



REACHING OUT

- 150 Home Visits Underway 
- Dozens of Thank You Cards 
- Dozens of Volunteers 
- Thousands of Volunteer Hours 

REACHING DEEP

- 95 Commitments 
- 10 Gifts 
- 105 Gifts and Commitments

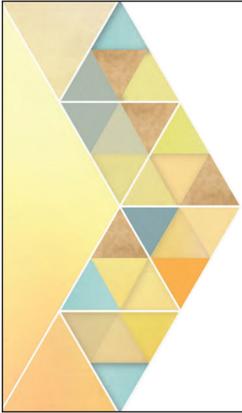
REACHING DEEP

Total Dollars (gifts & commitments)

- \$0.07
- \$0.57
- \$6.57
- \$36.57

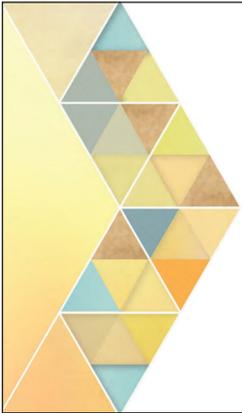


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REACHING DEEP

- \$636.57
- \$9,636.57
- \$89,636.57
- \$289,636.57



REACHING DEEP

- \$989,636.57
- \$1,989,636.57
- \$2,289,636.57
- \$3,000,000.00



\$3,265,083.57

REACHING DEEP

Predict \$2.0m (2.5 X Budget)

Ours \$3.2m (4 X Budget)

Exceeded \$1.2m

Thank You for Your Generosity



REACHING HIGHER

Our Goal: Work Hard &
Reach As High As We Can



Every Gift: Big or Small
Advances Our Vision,
Mission & Ministry

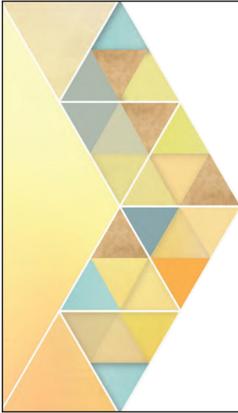
REACHING HIGHER

We invite...

Everyone to Pitch In

Fence Sitters to Hop Off the Fence

Procrastinators to Act



REACHING HIGHER

Now **Is** the Time

For All of Us to Reach Higher

To Do Our Very Best

To Support the Campaign with

Our Prayers, Goodwill,
Time, and Gifts

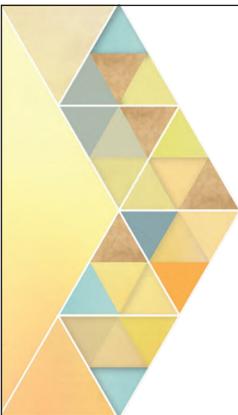


REACHING HIGHER

Now **Is** the Time For Us

To Celebrate Our Generosity

To Reach Higher for The Glory of
God and Our Neighbor's Good



REACHING HIGHER

Eight Weeks to Go

The Campaign Closes May 15

Questions?

Contact:

Donna Hollinger or Don Kraybill

Commitment Forms in the Narthex

SECOND HALF OF SERMON

Some of us hear \$3.2 million and think “Yes! That’s a lot of money. What a great investment in the future ministry of this congregation!” We just blew out of the water what most congregations our size typically do in a campaign! And we’re only halfway through.

Others hear that and thought, “Uh oh, we’re still seriously short of \$10.9 million dollar goal.” What if we don’t make it?

Does that mean we will have failed?

I am not discouraged a bit—I’m excited. Every dollar that we raise will be invested into our building and prepare us for future ministry. And we ain’t done yet.

The only way we are going to fail is if we don’t try or give up.

2 Timothy: poured myself out; finished the race, fought the good fight

The only way we are going to fail is if we don’t try.

I want to share a little story with you—it’s a true life story.

The moral of the story is this: if you set your sights high, if you set ambitious goals, if your smart enough to know how to readjust those goals, and you do your very best, you fight the good fight and finish the race, you have done a good thing.

The story is this: A couple of years ago I was asked to do a training in Colorado for Brethren Volunteer Services. I went out during the summer. Karin and I thought it would be really smart of us to go camp and hike. We love to camp and hike. So we did that.

Karin flew out, we met at the airport and went camping. Just literally up the road from where we were camping was a 14,000 ft peak, Mount Bierstadt. For those of you who don’t know about hiking, a 14,000 ft peak in North America is kind of the threshold, there aren’t any peaks in the contiguous US that goes above the 14,000’s. It would be a nice accomplishment.

So, here we are before the peak, we started at 10,500 ft the air was already getting thinner. We had to go through willow bog and hope to not to run into any bears, watching to make sure we kept our feet dry jumping over small creeks. We are fairly experienced hikers and we knew that this was a good goal. An admiral goal.

Things were going well, we didn't run into any bears. The trail was almost straight up the mountain. We checked on each other regularly and asking, how are you doing, are you eating enough, how are you feeling, are you staying hydrated.

We got to a point, that when you get to the start of the top, you start to run into a boulder field. Climbing over rocks of all different sizes. It's awkward and you start getting woozy because you are not getting enough oxygen to your brain. There came a point where Karin said, "You know what, I'm good, this is high enough, this is great." And like any good and loving husband would do, I said, "Wait right here, I gotta make it to the top." And the loving wife she is and understanding how my crazy brain works, she said, "Blessings to you, go for it."

So, I made it to the top. It was a beautiful view. I was there for a grand total of 60 seconds. Karin had made it almost the whole way. As I went back down and I realized. I found out that it is was pretty much the same view. But it was even better because we were together.

The moral of the story: We set our goals high, we tried our very best, we adjusted when was necessary, and I can't help but see parallels to how we think about our building projects and campaign to support that project. We set our sights high. Everything that is in those sketches in a ministry near and far. We set an ambitious goal. We didn't want to short change ourselves. I am not discouraged what so ever. We are excited to pursue this dream. There might come a time if we don't make our goal to readjust and we have a talented team who can do that. The only way that we are going to fail is if we give up, if we stop trying and get discouraged.

