

AT THE CROSSROADS: (ACTS 28:28-30)

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, KS, PASTOR LEE HENDON

GOD'S BEEN MESSIN' WITH ME - ALL THRU THE NIGHT TELLING ME I HAD PLANNED THE WRONG MESSAGE FOR TODAY. I TOLD GOD THAT WAS EASY FOR HIM TO SAY BECAUSE IT WAS NOT HIS SATURDAY NIGHT & WAS TOO LATE FOR A REDO. EVER HAD A TIME WHEN GOD WAS MESSIN' WITH YOU? AS YOU KNOW, GOD ALWAYS WINS SO I DID NOT SLEEP WELL - GOT UP REAL EARLY THIS MORNING FOR A MESSAGE REDO.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A SITUATION WHEN THERE WAS AN ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM & EVERYBODY WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THE PICTURES ON THE WALLS OR THE RAIN OUTSIDE? YOU ARE THINKING, "HEY, YALL, THERE'S AN ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM!" THERE ARE A COUPLE OF ELEPHANTS IN OUR SANCTUARY THIS MORNING SO THAT IS WHAT MY MESSAGE WILL ADDRESS. DID YOU EVER NOTICE THAT THE BOOK OF ACTS HAS NO ENDING? PAUL IS LEFT THERE JUST PREACHING AWAY IN ROME - NO ENDING. THAT IS BECAUSE THE *ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT* HAVE NOT ENDED BUT CONTINUE EVEN TODAY. THE FINAL CHAPTER WILL NOT BE WRITTEN UNTIL THE DAY OF THE LORD. WE ARE WRITING A NEW CHAPTER FOR FCC ATCHISON TODAY - WE HAVE HAD MANY CHAPTERS EVEN PRIOR TO 1882 - WHICH IS WHEN OUR CHURCH OFFICIALLY BEGAN. PRIOR GENERATIONS HAVE WRITTEN OUR EARLIER CHAPTERS & LATER GENERATIONS WILL READ THE CHAPTER WE ARE IN TODAY.

EIGHT YEARS AGO IN MY NEW YEAR'S DAY SERMON, TITLED, "THE STATE OF THE CHURCH," I MADE TWO VISIONARY STATEMENTS. ONE WAS WE MUST HAVE A FULL TIME MINISTER IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & YOUTH - THE OTHER WAS THE NEED FOR A MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING ON THE GROUND LEVEL THAT WOULD ENHANCE OUR MINISTRIES WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS & SENIORS. SEEMS JUST LIKE YESTERDAY. THOSE TWO ISSUES LOOM LARGE TODAY.

WE HAVE BEEN VERY INTENTIONAL & METHODICAL IN ARRIVING AT TODAY'S CROSSROADS - WHICH IS A DIFFICULT PROCESS FOR AN IMPULSIVE PERSON LIKE ME. IN JANUARY, 2010 A VISION TEAM WAS FORMED TO COME UP WITH A VISION FOR OUR CONGREGATION: "*AS THE BODY OF CHRIST, WE BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE, INVITING OTHERS TO JOIN US IN LIVING OUT THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST.*"

THE CONGREGATION WAS SURVEYED FOR GLEANING & SHAPING THAT VISION - THE VISION TEAM CHEWED ON IT LONG & HARD. GOD WAS LEADING OUR DIRECTION - WE FOLLOWED GOD'S LEAD. NEXT CAME THE CHALLENGE AS TO HOW TO FLESH OUT & GIVE DIRECTION TO THAT VISION. SEVERAL STAGES OF THE VISION HAVE ALREADY BEEN IMPLEMENTED. NOW WE GOT THESE TWO ELEPHANTS IN OUR SANCTUARY: PART TIME CO-ASSOCIATE MINISTERS & A PROPOSED POWERHOUSE BUILDING.

THE VISION OF AN ASSOCIATE MINISTER FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & SMALL GROUPS HAS BEEN WITH ME & THIS CONGREGATION FOR THE LONGEST. MY MINISTRY HAS BEEN THE ONLY ONE IN RECENT TIMES AT FCC WITH-OUT AN ASSOCIATE. THERE IS NOT ONE CONGREGATION IN KANSAS OR K.C. REGIONS NEAR OUR SIZE WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE FULL TIME ASSO-CIATE MINISTER. NOT ONE. FOUR YEARS AGO WE MADE A MOVE TO CALL AN ASSOCIATE - PLOTTED A JOB DESCRIPTION & PAY PACKAGE - WENT OUT TO FIND ONE. THERE WAS NO ONE ON THE SCENE - REGION OR NATIONWIDE THAT SUITED OUR SEARCH. WE THEN HIRED BARBARA WHICH PROVED OUT TO BE A MISTAKE ALL THE WAY AROUND. IT WAS WHAT IT WAS & NEED NOT HINDER OUR VISION FOR TODAY.

THAT IS WHAT WE USUALLY DO - JOB DESCRIPTION - PAY PACKAGE - GO ON A SEARCH. WELL NOT THIS TIME. GOD HAS COME TO US WITH A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY OF TRAVIS & KASSIE FIRST & THEN LEFT IT TO US TO WORK IT OUT & MAKE IT HAPPEN. GOD IS MESSIN' WITH US. SOME CHURCH MEMBERS HAVE SAID, NOT FAIR, WE WERE NOT YET ON THE SEARCH! WELL, YOU CAN SHARE THAT WITH GOD. GOD HAS PUT TRAVIS & KASSIE "*IN OUR WAY*" & ARE IDEAL FOR EVERY

FACET OF MINISTRY WE ARE NEEDING - CHILDREN, YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS, SMALL GROUPS, SOME MUSIC CONNECTIONS & A HEART FOR SENIORS. OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IS THAT THEY WILL GIVE US AN INSTANT & IMMEDIATE CONNECTION WITH YOUNG ADULTS & YOUNG FAMILIES THAT WE HAVE BEEN MISSING FOR YEARS! YOUNG ADULTS WILL BE ENABLED & EMPOWERED TO TAKE UP NEW PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP IN OUR CONGREGATION! I STRONGLY FEEL THIS IS A GOD THING!

THE SECOND ELEPHANT IN OUR SANCTUARY IS THE POWERHOUSE BUILDING. TODAY WE ARE NOT VOTING ON BUILDING THE POWERHOUSE BUILDING BUT PHASE ONE TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT TO MOVE BEYOND SPECULATION TO SOME DEFINED & PROJECTED SHAPE & FIGURES FOR COST & USAGE OF A MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING. WE ARE NOT IN THE BUILDING BUSINESS, TRUE BUT WE ARE IN THE MINISTRY BUSINESS & THE ISSUE BECOMES WILL THIS BUILDING HELP US BUILD & GROW OUR MINISTRIES IN ATCHISON OR NOT?

THE BUILDING MINISTRY TEAM & THEN THE VISION TEAM IN WHOLE HAS PUT THESE BULLETS ON THE POWERHOUSE BUILDING:

1. TO STRENGTHEN & EXPAND MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN, YOUTH, ADULTS & THEIR FAMILIES.
2. TO STRENGTHEN & EXPAND MINISTRIES TO THE COMMUNITY.
3. TO MAKE THE CHURCH MORE USER FRIENDLY, ESPECIALLY FOR THE HANDICAPPED & ELDERLY.

ETC. (10 NEEDS LISTED.)

UNTIL I DO PHASE ONE WE DO NOT KNOW IF THIS CAN BE DONE OR NOT. NEITHER DO YOU.... THIS IS NECESSARY STEP TO MAKE AN INTELLIGENT, INFORMED & INSPIRED DECISION ABOUT IT. I AM A LITTLE CURIOUS ABOUT OUR HESITATION WHEN I MEET IT. BECAUSE NOT ONLY HAS GOD GIVEN US THE VISION TO DO, GOD HAS GIVEN US THE SEED MONEY OF ALMOST \$200,000 TO MAKE IT HAPPEN - THRU THE RALPH & MARGIE CHURCH ESTATE - IF THAT IS HOW WE CHOSE TO USE THE MONEY. THIS, TOO, IS A GOD THING. WE ARE GOD'S CHURCH!

WE HAVE HAD SOME BIG CHURCH FIGHTS IN THE PAST. THE MOST RECENT ONE WAS OVER THE PEOPLE OF PRAISE SERVICE (WHICH HAS BECOME A VITAL PART OF OUR CHURCH) & THE PURCHASE OF THE BLUE HYMNALS - YES, WE LOST MEMBERS OVER THAT ONE. IN RECENT TIMES (30YRS OR SO AGO) IT WAS A CHURCH FIGHT OVER AIR CONDITIONING. SOMEONE DIED & LEFT SOME MONEY TO AIR CONDITION TH SANCTUARY. CHURCH FIGHT ON - YES, WE LOST SOME CHURCH MEMBERS.

THE CHRISTIAN WAY IS TO HAVE OUR DISCUSSION IN CHRISTIAN LOVE & UNITY - RESPECT & OPENNESS. VALUE EVERYONE'S OPINION - THEN ASK GOD, "GOD, WHERE ARE LEADING US?" THEN WE MUST BE BOLD & RESOLVED TO FOLLOW.

YES IT WILL TAKE SOME SACRIFICE & COMMITMENT FOR US TO INCREASE OUR GIVING. WE ARE BEING CALLED UPON TO MAKE SACRIFICES & COMMITMENTS NOT ONLY FOR TODAY BUT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. WHERE GOD LEADS, WE ARE TO FOLLOW..... WE ARE WRITING A NEW CHAPTER IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.

SO THERE ARE THESE TWO ELEPHANTS IN OUR SANCTUARY. HOW DO YOU EAT AN ELEPHANT? JUST A BITE AT A TIME & IT IS DONE!