

At Highway Tabernacle, we define and experience ministry with the following statement: "We are building a family that serves our community." Family building is costly. Pat and I speak about the high cost of parenting every time we buy food or clothing for one of our grandchildren. When we observe our children leading their families through the challenges of life, we remember our own experiences. The cost goes far beyond the financial. The investment of time is also huge. Family altar, conversations with children about their school days, storytelling, and listening to one another's distresses and joys all require time, lots of time.

The cost of building a foundation, for both family and church, includes the time-consuming practice of training sound doctrine and Biblical content. Doctrine is an expression of God's likeness and design for his people. The Apostle Paul taught his proteges, Timothy and Titus, about the threat to sound doctrine. Let us heed the urging of the apostle who, in emphasizing the unity of the faith, said, "we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." (Ephesians 4:13-14) In recent years, Sunday School has fallen out of popularity; however, the challenge of systematically teaching one another remains. The challenging task of developing new forums for training must be a high priority.

All reputable builders build from the ground up. Reaching children is a time-proven strategy which pays huge dividends. Shortly after we came to Philadelphia, this congregation committed resources to establish Spring Garden Academy. Today, the school thrives, and people who were introduced to Highway through the school attend the church and share in the joys of the church family.

The fruit of Highway's ministries to youth and children is similar, the result of strategic planning, careful implementation, and great teamwork. As our children and youth mature, a new superstructure is forming. As many of us know from our experiences as children, time and resources invested in children and youth make the church strong today, and tomorrow.

Our current endeavor at Resurrection Life Church has been arduous and slow. We are moving forward as resources allow. The work being done is of highest quality. The costs, though high, are but a fraction of what they might have been without generous donations of skills and materials.

The church family, like all families, is constantly changing. We all grow older, and some move on as the demands of life change. Even as we mourn those who move away, we must celebrate the fact that some who have been prepared for life and ministry while they were here are now expanding the scope of Highway Tabernacle's influence in ways and in scope known only to God. While we are constantly compelled to rebuild and adapt, we will remain true to the design the Lord of the Church shares with us. We must never lose sight of foundational values.

Building plans are subject to changes as the building proceeds, and changes demand amended strategies, deliberative decision making, and a stubborn determination not to give up! We must only move forward with the wisdom of a God-certified plan. Planning is a

prerequisite, not an afterthought.

I take this opportunity both to affirm those who embrace the values of Highway Tabernacle with presence, service, and prayers and to call on us all to continue to embrace the following foundational values which give evidence to the power of the new birth at work within us.

- ***We live to give.*** As disciples of Jesus, we seek to invest ourselves in others as wisely and as unselfishly as possible. Others may exist to gather, to have, and to hoard, but as Jesus' disciples, we serve; we give; we hold nothing back for ourselves.
- ***We teach what we believe; we reproduce who we are.*** As Jesus' disciples, we ought to be reproducing others who also follow Him.
- ***The presence of God's people guarantees the presence of God.*** The presence of Jesus' followers is an example to all who observe. Others will ask, "How do I become a follower too?" Living as the people of God and loving one another is powerful testimony to Jesus' saving power.
- ***When I work, I work. When I pray God works!*** We are never wiser, never stronger, or never closer to realizing life as God intended than when we pray. The level of participation in the week of prayer earlier this month is a reason to rejoice and a reminder to continue.

Much more could be added, but I call our attention to one last and serious consideration.

Pat and I are weary. The demands of ministry are many. The accumulation of years filled with the usual ministry responsibility combined with several building projects is beginning to take its toll. Desire still burns, and ideas keep coming, but our strength no longer keeps pace with either.

God has been good to call us here to serve with you all. As I have been urging members of the ministry team and the deacons to pray with us, I now I enlist you: Please pray that the Lord sends a successor who will live and serve in the city. As a church, we are only beginning. At best, Pat and I have nurtured an environment for the church's future in Philadelphia. **Let us believe that we and others can and should live here, serve here, and redemptively change what is now here.** Please pray that a successor, younger, with more energy and years ahead, will emerge. Pray that the church's leadership will be led of the Spirit in processing this transition. No, Pat and I have no definite time schedule, just an awareness that we must make way for others.

Thank you for the privilege of serving this church. Thank you, Ministry Team, for being the very best team with which a pastor could hope to work. Thank you, every member, for your generosity and affirmation of our leadership. Thank you for your prayers which sustain us. Thank you for expecting that the future will be still better than the past. Let us continue to ***build a family that serves our community.***

Sincerely,

Otto Wegner