

Faith for the Future Campaign Update
John Wilkinson June 1, 2008

On this multi-tasking Sunday, when we recognize outreach volunteers, commemorate our important More Light commitments, celebrate the anniversary of the Copeland Chimes and gather around the Lord's Table, it seemed worthwhile to add one more item to a busy agenda, a progress report on our "Faith for the Future" capital campaign. Inquiring minds want to know.

The central and primary message is gratitude. Thank you. Thank you to cabinet members, committee members, staff members, congregational visitors, who have given hour upon hour of time and energy and dedication. Thank you especially to the hundreds of visitors who in April and May have spread out across the four corners of our congregation to share this story.

As I said last week, we've learned a lot in this process, and apart from the campaign proper, we have become more deeply connected as a family of faith. I have heard people tell me "I've met people who live near me that I never knew..." and others, with some surprise in their voices, "These visits have been kind of fun..." Visitors, we will find a way later on to more formally and publicly recognize you, but for now, thank you, and thank you again.

And thank you to all of you. Thank you for your faithful and open reception of the campaign vision and your willingness to share your time and energy and commitment with a visitor. And thank you to all who have, as we have said, prayerfully considered, and who now have prayerfully responded.

Where do we stand? Thus far, we have received commitments just over \$5 million. In my mind, and in the mind of the campaign leadership, that is an extraordinary amount that far exceeds our earliest expectations, and will, already, give us the ability to do important and significant things.

Though we are still in process, more than 500 personal contacts have been made, with more than 400 of those being in-person contacts. That's a lot. Some visits are still in the process of happening, because of schedules or other circumstances. Four hundred twenty-five (425) households, whether individuals or families, have responded. 353 of us have made pledges thus far and some 72 of us are not able to pledge at this time, for a variety of important reasons, including some who will need to wait until personal circumstances change.

The pledges range the gamut - from 2 figures to one at 7 figures - about which we will hear soon - and everything in between.

These reflections are preliminary, but here is some of what we've learned so far. We've learned that you all are committed to this church and to this vision, that even though everyone might not agree with every detail and aspect of the vision, you appreciate its overall scope and the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of the approach. You've done your homework - you've read the extensive communications, come to meetings, thought and considered and prayed.

And your giving reflects that. Whatever the term we use - generous, sacrificial, stretch - you've done that. Some of you have utilized an annual bonus, or your tax refund check. Some of you are giving something up in order to make this commitment. Some of you have shared with me that you are utilizing an asset or resource that you hadn't planned on using, or using more of it than you had planned. That is inspiring and gratifying, because as a campaign leader said recently to me, a "significant gift to you is a significant gift to the church," at any level.

We've learned that we are diverse in our ages and stages and abilities. For some, this is the beginning of a process, for others the continuation, for others the culmination. We've learned that there is a generation for whom this may be the beginning gift in what will be a lifetime of giving, a gift made while there are still down payments to be made, braces to go on teeth and yes, educations to finance. And we've learned that there are generations whose financial situation is different, and who have been able to respond at a different level. We've learned that the current economy is a factor, but that people are responding even in the face of this economy.

So where are we in all this? As you might guess, it is all about time, and timing. We are not yet finished, and though we want final reports, it is not yet time. There are still visits to happen. If you've not yet been visited, and would like to be, please let me know. If you've previously declined a visit and would like to re-consider, please let me know as well, or Karen Pryor or Brenda Mains. Let me encourage that, not for financial purposes, but for community purposes, for the opportunity to make a personal church connection and to have the kind of conversation that has made this effort so valuable.

We know that some of you are still making decisions, for a variety of reasons, and that time is a key element in the decision-making process. There other groups yet to be contacted - out of town members, friends, supporters.

We want to decide, and yet there is much still to learn. I must say that I've learned a lot about timing and patience in all this!

The facilities group has begun the process of prioritizing, clustering, sequencing - a complex task because we like everything in the vision! The campaign cabinet has begun the process of discerning how to prioritize. Having put an ambitious and compelling vision out there for all of us to consider, we want to sustain that vision, but we want to do so informed by reality and pressing needs. That is challenging to do, because, as we've said, we are still not yet clear where we will land.

We want to give everyone the opportunity to respond and we will need adequate time to discern all of this, even as we want to hurry up and move ahead. As more responses come in over June, and they are coming in every day, we will communicate more, with greater detail, including communicating our plans for gift recognition. We are looking at Rally Day in early September as an important marker.

So thank you, and thank you again. This has been a spirit-filled, prayerful process, and prayers still are needed, for all those making decisions of every kind.