

I want to update you on the Future of the Faith.

Many of you have been puzzled and frustrated by the pace of the work being done on the church's exterior. I'll put myself in that camp, too. But after talking at length with Jack Morgan, I am more convinced than ever that we're on the right track. (Forgive me if I sound like a politician.) I'll explain in a minute.

First, a brief recap: The Future of the Faith campaign began several years ago, when we retained an architect to help us turn our church property wants and needs into a capital project that included dramatic renovations and exciting additions. But the price tag was more than a million dollars. As volunteer fundraiser for the project, I did what I thought was prudent: nothing, hoping that everybody would forget I volunteered.

But in the meantime, one of our failing HVAC systems, in fact, failed. Midway Christian had to take out a sizeable loan to install a new, more cost-efficient heating and cooling system for Fellowship Hall. It was the debt from that emergency that spurred many of us into action. A few individuals, then the board and the congregation, decided to scale down our campaign and focus on the most immediate needs: retiring the church's debt, repairing the building's crumbling exterior, and addressing accessibility.

If you can think of three more boring projects, I'd sure like to hear about them.

Stripped of big-time renovations, new bathrooms and a much-needed van, our capital campaign could have died for lack of interest—and funding. We needed \$250,000 just to do the bare necessities! However, we received an enormously generous gift right off the bat when one member ponied up \$150,000. Other members responded with a flurry of dinners, one very ambitious auction and many pledges.

With money either in hand or promised, we paid off the church's debt, replaced spent HVAC units servicing the sanctuary and then went to work restoring the building's crumbling exterior. Jack Morgan, an experienced engineer, took on the task of project manager. In his volunteer role, Jack enlisted expert advice from a masonry expert and matched our greatest needs with our modest budget.

As Jack explained the intricacies of the renovation project—and the series of setbacks and surprises—I got worn out just listening to him. Here's a guy who has darn near come out of retirement to oversee the restoration of our bricks and mortar. It's a job that is as tedious as it is complex for Jack and Bob Settlemire, another member who has stepped forward to help.

Heeding the advice of the masonry expert and his on-site protégé, Jack's priority has been to repair decades of weather and pollution damage to the brick and stone of our building. To save money, he and Bob made the hard choices that have drawn questions from the rest of us. What's taking so long? Why aren't those guys working harder? What's the story with the scaffolding?

In conversations with Jack and Bob, I asked all of those questions and more. Here are some of the challenges they have faced:

- **Big job:** The damage to the masonry was worse than anyone anticipated.
- **Bad weather:** When it gets too hot, too cold or too wet, the work must halt.
- **Tools of the trade:** Jack and Bob have begged and borrowed scaffolding—and left it erected to save the assembly costs.
- **High standards:** Clint, the on-site expert, is something of a perfectionist, but our budget is less than perfect.
- **Hard labor:** We're hiring people to perform painstaking work... outdoors... up high... for day-labor wages.
- **Doubting Thomases:** Out of concern for our wonderful building, many of us have had pointed questions for Jack, Bob, Clint, Heather, the workers etc.

Now, there's nothing wrong with asking questions about this project. It's our church and our money. But Bob Settlemire is our guy for questions – not Clint or his crew.

Bob checks in at the site every morning and afternoon, and Jack makes regular trips to the church and writes the checks. They are our management team, and they're saving us a ton of money. It would be exceedingly difficult to find—and afford—a contractor to oversee this work. I hope you'll come to respect and appreciate their efforts as much as I have.

So here's the bottom line: We're making progress—even though it's hard to tell. And there are still more bricks to fix and exterior areas to repair before we can begin making the front entrance more accessible. But we're getting there.

OK, enough about bricks. Let's talk money. In order to finish this project, we need to fund it. Jack tells me there is about \$50,000 in outstanding pledges, and I know those promises will be met. But don't feel like you need to stop there. If you are able to expand your initial support—or make a gift for the first time—have I got a collection plate for you!

And let's think about this: The sooner we fund and finish our most urgent priorities—and we've already accomplished a great deal—the sooner we can move on to more glamorous needs. (Dare we dream it? *Better bathrooms?*)

Keep the faith.

Sincerely,

Bob Rouse
Chair, Future of the Faith campaign