

Jackson Outreach Center

As I continue to grow in my relationships with Christ, I have learned to walk through the open doors and opportunities He places before me. Having walked through several doors and opportunities in the past, I have come to seek, watch, and listen with anticipation knowing the Lord has and continues to prepare a path before me. The story you are about to read was an open door the Lord provided not only for me, but for the church family I serve, and through it glorifying Himself each step of the way.

Three years ago, the Lord stirred in my heart a vision to open a youth center, a place where the youth of our community in Jackson, MN would be able to land, build relationships and “call their own”. As I sought the Lord and began to pursue potential locations, I quickly found out there was little to no opportunity within our city. A little discouraged but not defeated, I placed it in the back of my mind and over the next two and a half years I would pray about it, asking the Lord what His plan and purpose was for it, knowing the location situation had not changed.

Two and a half years later I was sharing with our new Lead Pastor, Nathan Janzen, the vision the Lord had given me to open a youth center at which point had grown into more than just a youth center, rather a community center we as a church would be able to serve the community through. Sensing the Lord was leading me into this venture, Nathan encouraged me to rekindle the flame behind the pursuit and once again search the city for potential location opportunities. Inspired by his enthusiasm, we received permission from the elder team and began the search. Through the process we came to find out that the local Presbyterian Church would be closing its doors soon. Though unfortunate, we also knew they had an education wing separate from their church building. While we were yet exploring this opportunity, the Presbyterian pastor invited us to share the vision with the leadership board of the church. They were excited to hear about our desire to continue to use the building for the advancement of the Gospel. In our excitement from their response and this opportunity the Lord provided, we took the news back to our elder board and began to discuss the details of what it would look like to purchase a building. Suddenly feeling overwhelmed by the process, we all took a step back and sought the Lord in prayer, encouraging one another through this that if the Lord desired for us to purchase this building, He would provide the avenue and means in which to do so.

As we sought to patiently rest in the Lord through what felt like an eternity of waiting, we got news that the local Presbyterian Church voted yes to sell us the building. Excited as we were to hear their hearts were aligned with ours, we still needed to discuss the purchase price for the building itself. As we continued to pray through this decision, it was shared with us through another person that the local church had also voted to sell us the PEB (Presbyterian Education Building) for one dollar! Yes, you read that correctly, one dollar! Taken back by this, we investigated the legitimacy of this news, and it was confirmed! The local Presbyterian Church indeed did vote to sell us the PEB for one dollar, but it was a vote of recommendation to send up to the Presbyterian denomination board where it would also need to be voted on to make it official. Knowing this and hearing there was some hesitancy on the denomination board about selling the building for one dollar, at our next elder meetings I shared with my brothers in Christ what the Lord was speaking to my heart. “Be still and



Presbyterian Education Building

watch me provide." I shared my heart about how at times I (we) can find ways to make things happen, but the Lord was stirring in me to stop focusing on how to make it happen, but rather lay the decision completely before Him. To trust in Him and allow Him to work so that He would receive the glory, honor, and praise through the purchase of this building. So, we did, we paused our pursuit of an amount to purchase and brought our request before the Lord to provide the building through the YES vote from the Presbyterian denomination board for the sale of the PEB for one dollar. Two days later we received word that the denomination board had voted yes! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! The Lord heard our request and receives all the praise for providing this opportunity to us as a church!



L to R Thor Kurtz and Nathan Janzen

As we continued to take steps of purchasing the building, walking alongside our congregation, and bringing them up to speed, the Lord continues to reveal Himself in powerful ways and affirm the path He has placed before us. One of which was our church voting YES to the purchase of this building, which is now called the Sheldon Jackson Outreach Center or as we refer to it, the JOC. The journey has been incredible so far as we have watched the Lord provide through the circumstances, variables and challenges. As we continue to prepare for the fall launch, our heart is to seek the Lord in prayer and repeatedly lay this at His feet desiring His will be done through each step, so He can and will receive all the glory, and honor and praise!

As I close, my heart burns within me of all the additional ways the Lord worked throughout this entire process, but I pray this glimpse of how the Lord has been working in our lives encourages you to continue pursuing, trusting, and laying everything at His feet knowing He has a path for you to take. Keep trusting that He will provide, and it will lead to praising His glorious name!

*Thor Kurtz, Youth & Family Pastor
First Baptist Church, Jackson, MN*