



After much planning and preparation our Capital Campaign is about to kick off! As many of you know, the emphasis of this Campaign centers around improving the accessibility to all areas of our building. It is time to make those improvements so that both our members and the community are able to safely and easily access both levels of our building.

As a longtime member, I recall our beloved member Ralph McDowell urging us to make it a priority to get this done. Although Ralph is no longer with us, I greatly respect his persistence in prioritizing this project for our church. Well Ralph, the time is now!

In the first phase of our campaign we will install a lift (a type of elevator), improve the ramp coming into the building, and update the area nearest to the ramp to include handicap parking spaces. Our goal is to have this phase completed by the end of the first quarter of 2026. The cost for this phase is estimated to be \$300,000.

Additional projects in this campaign include upgrading the heating system (new boilers), making several improvements to the Fellowship Hall, updating several restrooms, and making improvements to the Sanctuary. All of these projects are dependent on the success of the campaign.

Informational gatherings and guidance about donating will occur throughout August and September with Celebration Sunday planned for September 28th. It is time to “lift up” our neighbors and ourselves by implementing these transformational projects.

John French

*“Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.” - Isaiah 40:4*

Pastor Nikki and I were having a time coming up with a verse to use for the Capital Campaign – our sacred story doesn’t really highlight the need of modern churches for infrastructure that offers accessibility for all people. But good old Isaiah almost always has something helpful to say, and when this little verse popped up in conversation, we couldn’t shake it. Technically, of course, it’s not about elevators, or even church maintenance generally. But it *is* about access. In Isaiah it’s about making “a highway for our God,” a route by which “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”

In this light, we see that the lifting up and bringing low of the land is for the sake of all people having equal access to the revealed glory of God. Now, we may not think of cookies and coffee after service as the glory of the Lord, and even less so the council meetings in the community room. And while we're happy to have Elijah Haven use a downstairs office occasionally, we might not tend to frame that in the same language as a means of making straight the way of the Lord. But how many Elijah Haven clients with mobility issues can't make appointments here? How many among our own congregation are kept from the fellowship of after-worship coffee time or opt out of education events and so forth because getting downstairs is either too risky or impossible? That number is more than zero.

The kingdom of God is *among* us, which means it's in our worship, yes, and also in our fellowship, in our meeting together and studying together, in the way we are able to welcome people into our midst and into the fullness of our shared life as a faith community. It is when we gather with others that we experience God with us. And so we are called to remove obstacles – stumbling blocks – that prevent our friends and neighbors from participating fully in the life of this congregation. We are to create a smooth and level path (or, you know, a lift, safer parking options, and other functional improvements). And that, friends, is what this Capital Campaign is about.

We aren't the only folks who will benefit from these improvements. During September we will welcome a representative of a local organization each Sunday to speak about their good work within our broader community, and we'll begin to see how our improved accessibility can open up opportunities to encounter God with neighbors who don't come in for worship. We'll hear from Melissa Higby of FYCO, our friends at Elijah Haven, and from Skyler Davidson of 4-County Transitional Living.

Keep your eyes and ears open for updates!

Peace,
Pastor January