

From Houghton Centre to Lighthouse Gospel

For more than a year, we had prayed for more room. When the sanctuary could hold no more, we filed downstairs and watched the service on the video screen that had been set up for that purpose. We set apart a weekend to seek God's direction through prayer and fasting. We believed God could provide for us in a way that would not encumber us with debt. We believed...and the anticipation grew. What would the Lord provide for us? Would it be the building in Tillsonburg? Tillsonburg had ministry opportunities. Alas, it was not to be. Perhaps it would be the old vacant school in Eden—it had potential; no open doors. Enter Port Burwell—not even on our radar screen at first. But the door was not open—at least not right away. The building had stood empty for some time. We waited while two other interested parties entered into negotiations. It was not our desire to run ahead of God. We were not sure, yet.

Months earlier, we had started a building fund. On May 18, 2003, we had an initial offering of \$6 000, and we asked God to bless and multiply it. On March 21, 2004, a little more than ten months later, our building fund surpassed \$100 000 and we celebrated. We used no special means to raise money. We simply designated to the fund any money received above our regular operating needs. Our membership is a little over one hundred strong, and regular attendance just over two hundred. In fact, ours is a little country church that bursts at the seams when filled with 300 people; we have had it happen. God gave through the generosity of His people and dared us to believe.

The other two parties interested in the building ceased their negotiations without a sale. The door was open. In order for us to buy the building, circumstances would have to fall into place perfectly. Knowing this, we committed it to the Lord; we asked Him to open and close doors to lead us into His will. We knew the asking price was more than triple what we had saved. We offered \$275 000 knowing that we did not have the funds. The offer was conditional on the funds being there when the closing date arrived. Our initial offer was countered and the negotiations began.

Meanwhile, our beloved little Houghton Centre Gospel Church went up for sale. Who would be interested in an out of the way building and property in the middle of nowhere?

What price would such a property fetch? We would have to advertise far and wide. Or maybe not....It turns out a not too distant neighbour had been interested in the property for a few years—the hand of God at work? While you decide, we believe. Negotiations began.

Within a few weeks, agreement was reached on the sale of our property and the property in Port Burwell. God had provided in such a way that all the money would be available on the closing date. The final negotiated

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prices on both properties combined moved \$75 000 in our favour from where they initially started.

The gift of a sanctuary that will seat 400 or more in exchange for one that seats 150 has now been provided debt free. Neither the Tabernacle nor Solomon's Temple were financed. They were built on the free will offerings of God's people. While not on the same scale, what the Lord has done for us is the same.

Like many of the wondrous things that God orchestrates, there is more to this story. Our faith is not yet complete and we have much to learn. In closing, I offer the following two points as proof that we have not yet arrived.

One, God provided not one but two buildings where His people can gather to worship Him. In our self effort, we did plan a fundraising yard and bake sale for the building fund. To God's glory, we had all the money we needed before the sale date arrived. So we decided to designate all the proceeds from the sale to build a church in Asia, for our fellow brothers and sisters there, through Gospel for Asia. When all was said and done, there was exactly enough money to build a church in Asia. One God, double the blessing.

Two, when we made our initial offer on the Port Burwell property, it seemed good to us to give God 60 days to gather the funds together. God did it in less than 30 days. He was not limited by our faith, but glorified Himself in the face of our unbelief. Now, we have counted down more Sundays than perhaps necessary, but our faith has been challenged to grow in the process. God is still in the business of working wonders. Amen.

Peter Wiebe