

## ***Moving Forward***

*By Rev. Greg Creasy*

I am sure you have noticed there are several projects going on around our church building. The kitchen is being completed and will be operational by the end of August. Work has begun on the addition of folding partitions in the fellowship hall. The outside of the building will soon be looking different (and better) as the much needed upkeep to the exterior of the building is completed. Your giving in the past few months has helped us to move forward in all these projects. Your faithfulness to respond to the call of God in this matter is overwhelming. As of the publication of this newsletter, we have gifts and commitments in the amount of \$60,800 toward our goal of \$118,000! We are over halfway to our goal! At this rate, we will have the projects completed by the end of the year.

But there is more to this than just our building and grounds. If we are to be faithful to God's plan and agenda, we need to keep moving forward in areas of ministries, worship, and staffing. Plans are in the formation stage for all of these areas. I have been prayerfully considering each of these areas. There are so many ways that we can go...so many different ways to approach each of these areas. We must be diligent to do our part in seeking God's face and using our gifts of planning and preparation for the future. Let me detail each as part of the vision God has given.

### *Ministries at Pea Ridge*

I believe that God has called us to increase our involvement in the community - offering studies that would meet people's needs, such as financial issues, parenting issues, recovery issues and more. I believe that as we grow in numbers as a congregation, we also need to grow in our connectedness in smaller groups. Having places and opportunities for individuals to connect with others is extremely important as we grow as a church. We are beginning to address this with a new approach to Sunday evenings at Pea Ridge. Beginning in September, there will be more than one option for Bible study on Sunday evenings. This fall, we will have classes on Financial Management, Dealing with Grief and some practical issues of service and visitation. More details will be coming in the near future about each of these classes. This will offer new ways of reaching out to meet people's needs in our community. It will also be good for us to grow personally as disciples of Jesus Christ.

### *Worship at Pea Ridge*

As we continue to see an upward trend in our worship attendance, I feel that God is leading us to add an additional service on Sunday mornings. Our sanctuary can *comfortably* seat about 250-260 people. We are close to the mark were people are not able to find a seat. I know for a fact that we have had people come into the sanctuary recently, look for a place to sit, not find a place, and leave before the service started. We can't have that happening! If our goal is to grow the kingdom of God, we must provide the space for them to come. There has been talk about this in the past couple of years. It has received both positive and negative reactions. I feel that the best approach would be a have mirrored services - the same service offered at two different times. This would expand our ability to reach even more people in the months and years to come. This is a much needed step! We have to do something as we continue to grow. I believe that we need to address this need by the end of September, with an additional service possibly beginning in October 2007. Pray with me concerning this area of our church.

### *Staffing at Pea Ridge*

As we continue to grow in numbers and expand our ministries, the need for an additional full-time minister on our staff is very real. As your pastor, I can only reach out to and minister effectively to a certain number of people at a time. An additional full-time minister would increase the personal contact with individuals in our congregation. My strengths as a pastor are in the areas of administration, teaching and pastoral care. It would be important to have a person with interest and gifts in outreach and evangelism and discipleship. These are areas that are needed as we continue to grow in membership. Pea Ridge is at a critical point when it comes to staffing. The most effective ratio for church staff has been documented as 150:1 (one staff member for every 150 people). If this is true, we are understaffed. To grow toward 300 (as we are doing) will require addition to our staffing BEFORE we reach that mark. Yes, we have part-time staff members, but they are not able to stay completely focused on their ministry rolls. They each have full-time jobs and give over and above in their work at the church. A full-time pastoral staff member would give a concentrated focus on ministries and activities at our church, much like I am able to give. This is an area that is a new venture for Pea Ridge, but one that we must not back away from. We must look to our God to give us direction and discernment in the months ahead.

These are new and exciting areas of focus in our church. God is working in a great way in our congregation and we must be faithful to respond to His call on our church and our lives personally. We must keep moving forward, considering God's faithfulness in the past and remembering the secure future that He has for each of us and for Pea Ridge Baptist. The apostle Paul put it this way:

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.*

*Only let us live up to what we have already attained.”*

Philippians 3:12 - 16 (NIV, emphasis added).

Let's put our lives in line with what God is calling us to do as a church. Let's keep our eyes on Jesus Christ and on His call and purpose for our lives and our church. Let's keep moving forward for His Glory and none other.

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