

*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain... (Psalm 127:1)*

In the Old Testament, the people of God were sojourners. God called Abram from a family of shepherds to be his chosen vessel for blessing to the world. Though he promised to give him the land of Canaan, Abram wandered. So did Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants. Even after bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord made them wander for 40 years because of their lack of faith. Finally, though, they entered the land that God had promised hundreds of years earlier to Abram.

During all the sojourning, God vowed to be with his people. He even made himself manifest in a place called the Tabernacle – a tent where God’s special presence would dwell in cloud and fire. This tent could be taken down and moved wherever the people went. But, centuries later, when David became king, he came to a realization – *See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent* (2 Samuel 7:2). At first, Nathan the prophet told David to go, *do all that is in your heart, for Yahweh is with you* (7:3). But, God responded in an interesting way: *Go and tell my servant David, “Thus says Yahweh: Would you build me a house to dwell in?...Yahweh declares to you that Yahweh will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever”* (7:5, 11–13). David took that to mean that his son would build a ‘house’ for the Lord – which is exactly what Solomon did, building the Temple after David’s death. But, is that what the Lord meant?

November is set aside to commemorate our building during our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The cornerstone for our sanctuary was laid 100 years ago in May, and the completed building was dedicated in November. It is a magnificent building, inside and out, and we are blessed to have it. At 100 years old, we also recognize the continued need to care for it and preserve it. Yet, as wonderful as our church building is – with its beautiful bricks, stunning stained glass, and attractive acoustics – we know that the building itself is not the ‘house’ which God has promised to us, no more than it was to David. Yes, God is with his people, though he *does not live in temples made by man* (Acts 17:24). No – God is with us in Jesus Christ, the *greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)* (Hebrews 9:11). He is ‘Immanuel’ – “God with us” – and indeed, he is with us, just as he promised.

Jesus is reported to have said, *I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands* (Mark 14:58). Just as he promised, Jesus rose from the dead. We believe that in Jesus, *the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily* (Colossians 2:9). And, until he comes again, his promise remains sure – *Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). How? Through his Word and Spirit, even manifest with water, under bread, and in wine. We may come together in our beautiful church, but *where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them* (Matthew 18:20) – whenever we hear God’s Word, receive his good gifts, and live together in Christ’s love.

-Pastor Squire

“We are God's house of living stones, built for His own habitation. He through baptismal grace us owns heirs of His wondrous salvation. Were we but two His name to tell, yet He would deign with us to dwell with all His grace and His favor.”

(“Built on the Rock,” *LSB* 645, v. 3)