

New Sanctuary Dedication 7/12/26

Today is momentous day! **After 23 years of praying**, waiting, hoping, yearning, and struggling to believe it would happen, it finally happened: our new Sanctuary is ready and better yet—we're in it, right now, having service!

It's a great honor when God allows us to be **present at both seed time and harvest** because, as we see in the Bible, *it doesn't always work that way*.

Gateway began in early 2003 when our founding Pastor, Fran Mather, was retired. He'd planted New Life Church in Elmira and had turned things over to his youngest son, Paul. Fran was comfortable attending church there and enjoying time off. Then the Lord told him he was doesn't yet...that he needed to plant a church in Addison.

Fran grew up here, in Borden specifically. His first church was in the Wards building in downtown Addison, the corner of Main Street and Valerio, in the 1960s. It's the parking lot near 7-11 now. The Lord told Fran it was time to return to his old stomping grounds and start a church.

What to call it? Fran sought the Lord, Who said "Gateway Fellowship" and Fran had a vision of our church being the gateway to revival in Addison.

The first meeting was in September 2003 and I went only having met Pastor Fran once (and not liking him that much) and only knowing a few people there. It was in the Community Center in HALF the room—the wall divider was up as AA was having their meeting on the other side. The place was packed just as much as we were in the old Sanctuary, and things got really LOUD that first meeting!

Our special guest **worship leader that night was Kim Falkenberg!** He and Dianne were full time at another church back then, but pastor Fran prophetically invited him, and Kim prophetically accepted. I can only imagine what the AA people were thinking on the other side of that wall as we clapped and shouted whilst praising the Lord.

When Fran finally took the pulpit, one thing he announced was a prophetic promise God had given him: that we wouldn't be renting forever, but **God would give us our own property and building.**

It was exciting and, of course, most of us believed **this would happen right away**. I had confidence in both God and Pastor Fran and the reason for the latter was that Fran was an experienced church planter. He'd started several churches from the ground up, had purchased property, taken over buildings, built buildings, and made sure *everything was in place before he passed the torch to the new pastor*.

That same night, Fran uttered another prophecy God had given him: that within 3 years he would retire (again) and that **"the Lord will raise up one from among you"** to take over. Therefore I believed that Fran would have everything in place before he stepped down and before the new pastor, whoever he was to be, took over.

I became part of leadership and we **talked and prayed about acquiring property and building** on it often. Fran felt like God had shown him the place: *a vacant parcel right across from the American Legion*. He went and spoke to the owner who named a six-figure price which I choked at. We had no money and I mean that: the building fund was new and only had a few hundred bucks in it, at that point.

The 6-figure price was for the land only, and the building would be an additional cost!

I expressed my concerns to Fran at the time, and he told me we needed to believe God. Was He not the same God Who parted the Red Sea so the Hebrews could escape? Was He not the same Lord Who walked on water, raised the dead, healed the sick, and cast out the devil? Was He not the same Lord Who kept every promise He ever made?

Fran reminded me that while we **couldn't have confidence in men**, we could always have it in God...and that if God promised us something, it was ours. He encouraged me to **be like Caleb** who said "let's go possess the land" despite it being full of heavily armed hostiles, living in fortified cities, with giants as their vanguard. He pointed out that God rebuked the scouts who said "it can't be done!"

Fran took us to the land one evening and, just as it was getting dark, we all joined hands in we prayed and declared, in Jesus' name, that the land would be ours despite any man-made barriers! That a building would go up on it where God was glorified!

A year and a half went by and we still didn't have the land. The owner wasn't budging on his price. Next thing you know, *Gateway is being turned over to me* (story I won't tell today) and Fran has retired to FL. I still remember him saying to me *"once I get to FL you can call me and ask for advice and prayer; and I'll give it. I'll let you vent your frustrations if you need to. But the church is your responsibility."*

Now people were coming to me and asking: *"so what about that property on Maple Street? Are we still going to buy it and build there?"* I hemmed, I hawed, and talked up what a great setup we had at the CC...why give that up? Fairly new facility, A/C, good bathrooms, decent sized room, low rent.... We were "comfortable" there, but some of that comfort was based on fear and lack of belief that buying land and building on it were financially feasible.

Our building fund was growing to be sure...as the years passed it grew to 5 figures, then 6. Not a small amount, but not even close to being enough to purchase land and build. Every time the thought of doing so was brought up to me, I thought of what Jesus said:

[Luk 14:28-30 ESV] 28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

My problem was that **I was counting the cost and finding we weren't even close.** I looked into what it would cost to build a structure, even if we already had the land bought and paid for...WAY higher than the amount of money we had. My wife would report to me that people were still donating to the building fund and, every time she said that, I would feel guilty. I felt as though we had a massive vat to fill with water, and the fill hose was only trickling. I worried that if we started the project, we would run out of money and everyone in Addison would mock us...mock me.

In 2019, however, things seemed to be moving. *My dad offered to gift us a plot of land* down near where I sell Christmas Trees, on the other side of town. The Lord began giving us—the Gateway people—**prophetic dreams**. One of the first people to get one was Dianne Falkenberg, who shared hers in front of the entire church, seeing the building from the inside. At the same time, Jewell Hayes also had a similar vision that was nearly matching and this is important. When it comes to prophecy under the New Covenant, God speaks to 2 or 3 witnesses to confirm a prophetic word and not just one guy like an Ezekiel or Isaiah.

This put me on the spot... God put me on the spot b/c I'd *given up and fallen into unbelief of the promise He made in 2003*. After hearing these confirmed prophecies, people were now coming to me again and asking when we were going to get started.

Despite the blessing of the land, **I was still “counting the cost” of a new building** and choking. I met with other pastors who'd built churches from the ground up, and they confirmed new buildings were expensive: high 6 figures or low 7 figures by the time everything was said and done. Fear overcame me again and when people excitedly asked me when we were going to get started, I hemmed, I hawed, said *“these things take time, can't be rushed, etc.”*

Then God gave me my own prophetic dream. I was a kid again, and my dad was young. We were both standing in an open field with a hill behind it, and Dad had surveyed out 3 parcels. Dad used to be a surveyor and, when I was a kid, I would go with him to measure out the boundaries of property. The Lord gave me this dream this way, b/c He knew I would “get it.”

He pointed to the 3 parcels he'd marked out and said: “two of these are for others, one is for you, and I'm keeping the mountain.”

I woke up knowing the dream was from God and that it **confirmed the prophetic promise God gave Pastor Fran in 2003** AND the dreams given to you: the Gateway congregation.

- I knew this was about Gateway owning its own property to build a church.
- I knew that “dad” in my dream was God telling me He was going to KEEP His promise.

Let's pause right now, and *read God's Word about whether He's a promise keeper or breaks them:*

Numbers 23:19 (NIV): “God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

Joshua 23:14 (NIV): “You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”

Psalms 145:13 (NIV): “The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.”

Despite all of what I just testified to happening in 2019, **I fell back into unbelief about the promise God made us.** I read the verses I just shared and “tried” to maintain my faith. Tried and failed to the point where I began to wonder if there was a way we could refund the money we’d collected for the building fund, or something.

But now let me show you this verse (there are others like it) *that give the encouragement that I sorely needed and still need:*

2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV): “If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

If we are faithless, God remains faithful. Why? He cannot “disown” Himself.

In other words, **He doesn’t break His word.** Doesn’t go back on a promise He’s made. If He were to do so, He wouldn’t be GOD.

As I preached recently: **if God makes a promise it doesn’t depend on us to make sure it comes through.**

The same LORD told the founding fathers of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—**that they would have their own land.** They would live there and prosper, that He would be their God, and they would be His people.

All one needs to do is *read through Genesis and Exodus* to see that the devil and people did everything they could to stop this from happening, all the way up to mighty armies, giants, and more. Satan fought God and Israel the whole way right up until Joshua finally took the land, and even then, it didn’t stop there. Israel fell into unbelief and rebellion several times during. **Yet Israel finally got to possess their land b/c God told them they would.**

The Lord told William Bradford and the Puritans that He would **bring them out of Holland (where they were living having fled England) and to their own promised land.** He led the colonists to board the famous ship and sail over here. If you read his journal, it was fraught with peril from day one with half the passengers dying while they crossed the Atlantic to get here. There were non stop storms all the way across, so the captain kept everyone locked below where they starved and got sick with no relief.

The real battle began **after they arrived** with a harsh winter, no food, and lame shelter. A bunch more of them died of freezing and starvation.

Again: **the devil threw everything they had against the Puritans trying to stop them from possessing the land God had given them**, but 250 years later, here we are. Why? *Because God made a promise and He keeps His word.*

So here we are, Gateway. **23 years of waiting**, praying, declaring, donating, and for me: fretting, questioning, doubting, stressing...*I stand amazed that we're HERE.*

If you're here today, it's a great honor bestowed by the Lord. It doesn't matter if you just started coming a week ago, or decades ago: **you're here at harvest time.**

Many have gone before us, some already mentioned. Many believed in God's promise that this day would come and they *donated money, prayed, hoped, and dreamed*...yet they aren't here to see this realized because the Lord received them in Heaven.

Pastor Fran, Dianne Falkenberg, Ray Dyke, Karen Mattison, Dave & Linda Coleman, and others over the years **who planted seed but didn't get to see the harvest.**

Those folk are examples of faith. God says the same thing in Hebrews 11:

[Heb 11:8-16 ESV] 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 **For he was looking forward to the City that has foundations**, whose designer and builder is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. 13 **These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar**, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it

is, *they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, *for he has prepared for them a city*.

God showed Abraham the New Jerusalem spoken of in Revelation 21 & 22. What we call “heaven.” Showed him the gates of pearl, the streets of gold, the river of life, the tree of life, everything. He revealed that the NJ is the TRUE Promised Land where God will be our God, and we will be His people. Where we will all live together eternally with no death, no sin, and no devil. Abraham saw the NJ descending from heaven, just as it speaks in Rev 21.

Abe died before any of this happened, and had to rely on faith alone that God would live up to His promise.

God showed Sarah that her son Isaac would be the ancestor of the 12 Tribes of Israel from whom Messiah Himself, Jesus would come. Jesus Who would bring His Kingdom to earth, die on the cross for our sins, rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, and then return.

Sarah had to take it all on faith, because none of these things happened while she was alive.

You and I? Right now? **We’re getting to see this**, live it, enjoy it, and marvel at the finished product.

And someday the trumpet will sound. The Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel. We will meet the Lord in the air, be transfigured, and forever be with Him.

The day is coming and it’s not today.

- The day is coming, but we may or may not be physically alive to see it.
- Let’s keep our faith not because we’re good at that, but because the Lord is faithful.
- And He keeps His promises.