

The Lord Will Provide . . .

A Little History in the Building of the St. Luke Outdoor Worship Center

In 1997, as the Properties Committee was in the initial planning stages for the Outdoor Worship Center, the Properties Chair learned that the Vice Chair was graduating from college and had accepted a job in another state. The Chairman stated, “I don’t know how we are going to do this without you . . . we need your expertise . . . **with your training as a groundskeeper, your knowledge and degree in turf management is essential to the success of this project**”.

He replied, “Don’t worry . . . **the Lord will provide**”.

A short time later, a young couple, new to our congregation, had volunteered to help hang our Christmas decorations. Seeing their willingness to volunteer, they were asked to serve on the Properties Committee and help on the planning of the Outdoor Worship Center. They agreed. It wasn’t until two months later that we learned he was a **Landscape Architect** and she was a **Civil Engineer**.

A little while later, another new member offered his expertise. “I’m a **Structural Engineer** and I think I can be of help”. A week later, one of his co-workers (who also had recently joined St. Luke) said, “I’m also interested in helping. I’m a **Civil Engineer** and our company will let us use our equipment and computers to design the Outdoor Worship Center and draw the blueprints”. We had the member expertise to develop the plan. They also knew what building permits were needed, including how to conduct a decibel sound/noise study as required by the local township Planning Commission. With a successful test conducted, the township Planning Commission approved the project at its next meeting.

As we continuously sought recommendations and suggestions from the congregation, one consistent message came through from our members . . . “keep the Outdoor Worship Center simple and as close to nature as possible.” The Committee discussed whether to build wooden seats or, as expressed by the congregation, “to keep it as natural as possible”. We decided to use natural limestone for seating. But where could we get tons of limestone at a reasonable cost? Another member, who just joined our Committee said, “You know . . . **my wife’s family owns a limestone quarry in Alpena**”. We had our source. For the next two years, between the quarry’s dynamite blasts to supply limestone for numerous great lake harbors, the workers at the quarry carefully set aside and hand picked the necessary stone for our altar, our chancel flooring, our seating, and our landscaping.

But funding was still a concern. As we were about to seek funding, a member came to us and asked if she and her family could pay for the altar stone. Her late husband had always loved the outdoors. They paid for the altar stone . . . in fact, **the family increased their memorial offering and paid for all the limestone** . . . all 175 tons. The pattern continued. **More memorial funds and other donations** were dedicated to the Outdoor Worship Center. These thoughtful contributions paid for our limestone, our landscaping trees, our perennial gardens, our sodding, our equipment rental, and other necessary items.

As the altar stone and the first shipment of 50 tons of limestone arrived, one of our Committee members studied the operator's manual of the rented 10,000 lb. All Terrain forklift . . . a forklift capable of lifting 5 tons of stone. As he was carefully, but slowly, unloading the first stone . . . a neighbor walked up to us and said, "you know, **I operate these forklifts for a living**, I could help you". In very little time, the neighbor had skillfully unloaded all 50 tons and had placed and leveled the altar stone in its permanent location.

We now faced a tremendous task. Each seating stone, some weighing over a ton, had to be carefully lifted, balanced, set and leveled in place. We had to use a BobCat forklift . . . and no one knew how to operate one. And the work could be dangerous. We prayed for direction and guidance. Two hours later, **one of our engineers**, after reading the operator's manual, **had mastered the forklift** and had moved 28 stones in place to be leveled for seating. In fact, by the end of the building phase, 7 other volunteers had learned to operate the forklift.

And other members came forward and volunteered. Over the next two summers and many weekends, **over 50 men, women and young people volunteered** over 2,000 hours. They used their construction and building expertise to place and level over 350,000 pounds of limestone for seating, landscaping, and chancel flooring. As the Lord watched over us, not a single injury occurred.

But, we also continued to have other special needs. Time and time again, members with their special talents continued to come forward. One member, **whose hobby was perennial gardening**, offered to design and plant all our landscaping (and how beautiful it is!).

When we needed to provide electrical outlets to the site, **a charter member** of our congregation **knew exactly where to hook up to our underground wiring**. In one day, he had 8 outlets installed, plus a 9th special one . . . a 30 amp. outlet to handle all the electrical needs for our coffee makers.

As we discussed what type of sound system to install, another member stepped forward and said, "I am a **Sound Engineer** . . . I can design the sound system for the Outdoor Worship Center."

When we wanted to decorate the paper weights needed for outdoor use, another member, a **gifted artist**, painted beautiful Biblical scenes on each of the 8 stones . . . all within 24 hours.

Truly . . . throughout this project **the Lord had provided** . . . the financial gifts, the member's talents, and the volunteer hours . . . and he continued to watch over us.

Finally, as we were nearing completion of the building phase . . . one last decision had to be made. We thoroughly discussed whether to place crushed limestone between the seating rows or, if grass could grow between the rows . . . we would sod it. Then . . . (as if we should no longer be surprised) . . . a new member came to us and said, "I think I can help you out . . . I am the head **groundskeeper for a major corporation** . . . **I have a degree in turf management**"

