



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059  
stjohnky.com

**Message for June 18, 2023**  
**“By Faith. Moving Forward”**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2**

Forgive me for the indulgence of telling a couple of stories from forty-five years of ministry. My retirement certificate I got at Annual Conference has 44 and a ¼ years. I’m not at all sure how they came up with that.

### **By Faith—Called to Ministry**

I accepted a call to ministry very early in life. More telling is the continual acceptance of that call throughout. If I had not done that, I would have been living life and ministry based upon a decision of a ninth grader. For me, call is always present tense. I am mindful of God’s call upon the life of Moses as he stood before the burning bush.

*“Take your shoes off for you are on holy ground.” (Exodus 3:5)*

Continue telling the story of Moses standing before God.

### **By Faith—Don’t Worry about Anything**

You have heard me speak of New Song. It was an outdoor Christian Music Festival that we put on for twenty-six years. One year, we were faced with a strong chance of showers. The morning before all the concerts we prayed. My friend, Beau, prayer for *“cool, dry, and partly cloudy.”*

Our prayer time was quite inspiring. Afterward though, I was quick to ask, *“Okay, who’s going to get the plastic.”* I have always been an *“O ye of little faith”* when it comes to such things.

That night the storm clouds did roll in, just about the time we got started. Reports were that it was raining on the other side of the camp. I stood behind the crowd ready to call things if need be. I will never forget what happened. The clouds split, going to the left and right of the stage. We didn’t get a drop.

*“Don’t worry about anything, but in prayer make your requests known to God with thanksgiving and the peace, that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.”*  
(Philippians 4:6)

As Ashlee reminds us often, *“God’s got this.”* And we remember from our study from Hebrews 11 that God parted the waters of the Red Sea, and the people marveled at what God was doing as they walked through.

## **By Faith—Just Enough, Just in Time**

Centenary had purchased one hundred acres on Athens-Boonesboro Road near I-75 in Lexington. The land was just outside the Urban Service District, which means there were no sewers or even potential for sewers. We owed about \$3 million on the property and were throwing out about \$37,000 a month to that debt and another one we had. We had even raised a million dollars to service the debt for a few years. Eventually, that money ran out and we had to call upon reserves. Over time, those reserves began to run out.

While all that was happening, I struck up a conversation with Fayette County Public Schools about them purchasing a portion of that land for a new High School they were looking to build. That school would become Frederick Douglass High School, which was NOT built on Centenary's property.

I knew they were also looking to build a new elementary school in the area, so I began talking about that with them. They thought that was a good idea for a lot of reasons. We did too. Since there was a middle school right next door they could tap into their sewers. They could also call on certain laws which worked in their favor with the Department of Transportation. All of this meant that we could get a much higher rate per acre than we would selling it as undeveloped farmland.

It was a slow slog, a two-year slog. We all had a lot of hoops to jump through. I made more than a few trips to Frankfort. All the while, we were running out of money. The property closed right before that happened. The amount we received was just enough to pay off those two debts and replenish our reserves. I have ever since repeated the phrase, *"Just enough, just in time."*

You remember from our study of Hebrews 11 talking about the testing of Abraham when his son, Isaac asked, *"Father, where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"* And Abraham said, *"The Lord will provide,"*

Just enough, just in time.

## **By Faith—Go Where Sent**

Moving has always been a big deal. I can't tell you what a big deal it is. It is always tough leaving. I have always stayed at it until the very last minute. I look forward to a full week next week. I have though repeated a thousand times over the past three months, *"Let go. It's okay to let go."* Moving has its challenges. I have found that leaving is never easy. Getting started isn't either.

Moving represents stepping out into the unknown, which always demands a great deal of faith. While we may not know what's around the next bend in the road, we can be well-assured that God will be there. I have always known that to be the case. Our first appointment was to Browder and Elm Grove just outside of Madisonville. Cheryl took the call from our District Superintendent to tell us where we were going. *"Your appointment is Browder and Elm Grove,"* he said. *"Where's that?"* Cheryl responded. *"I don't really know,"* he said. That was a tip-off. I am sure he knew where Christ Church or St. Paul was, not Browder and Elm Grove.

Moving is tough on families. Some of you know that Cheryl grew up in a parsonage family. They moved all the time. Before we were married Cheryl shared with a family friend that she was engaged to a ministerial student. The friend replied, *"You know, that's like having the flu your whole life."*

Moving is tough on the extended family. Back when the boys were much younger and we were moving to Owensboro my mom told me later that when we pulled out my dad kind of teared up and said, *"Well, I guess they're gone."* I thanked God countless times the other day in packing up my books, *"I sure am*

*thankful we don't have to move."*

Cheryl and I have identified with Abraham and Sarah so many times whenever we have had to move. It is not easy moving when you have it made at one place and must move to another. That's the way it was for Abraham and Sarah in the move they made from Ur to Haran in Canaan, and then on to Shechem. *"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."* (Hebrews 11:8)

### **By Faith—Surrounded by a Great Cloud of Witnesses**

For years I gave the Means of Grace talk at the Chrysalis Weekend here in the area. I would always start out by sharing how I had known God through the people he had put in my life. I would list mom and dad, preacher, Wayne, Tim and Sammie, Dr. Rogers, Cheryl, and Mac.

That list has grown over the years to include Mr. Strader, Bobby and Charlotte, Ray, Susan, Martha, Tony and Sharon, Sal and Cindy, Garrison and Susan. It includes Don and Marla, Bob and Teri, Lee and Suzanne, Tom and Pat, Wes and Carol, Bob Robinson, Clarence, and Tripp.

It includes Keene, Gina, Richard, Julie, Derek, Scott, Doug and Brenda, Greg and Betty, Sam and Beth, Mike and Jonelle, John and Ashley, and, of course, my buddy, Stan.

That list doesn't begin to include the long list of peers in the ministry, a list that is too long to mention. And, of course, **each of you** is included on that list—a great cloud of witnesses.

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."* (Hebrews 12:1-2)

I met with a group of friends from high school on Thursday night to begin planning our 50<sup>th</sup> High School Reunion. I have thought since there is no way that they have been blessed like I have with such wonderful friends down through the years. I served two churches twice, that never happens. Saint John is one of those churches. St. Paul is the other.

When James Williams, the D.S. in Lexington at the time, called to share that I would be going to Saint John, I told him. *"Tell the bishop, thanks."*

I am still thankful, big time.