**Campbell Speech [EZ Speech No. 16548]**

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Remarks by Mr. James Campbell at the 150TH anniversary of the founding the Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church.

*“do you believe in miracles?”*

that’s what play-by-play announcer al michaels asked the world back in 1980 as he counted down the FINAL seconds of the u.s. olympic hockEy team’s unlikely victory over the vaunted russian TEAM, on their way, ultimately, to WINNING the gold medal THAT YEAR. For AMERICAN sports fans, it truly WAS A MIRACLE, for there was no way this scrappy group of american amateurs could possibly have vanquished the mighty russians.

but they did BEAT THE RUSSIANS. AND THEN THEY BEAT THE FINNISH TEAM. AND THEY WON THE GOLD MEDAL. AND THAT *WAS* A MIRACLE.

about a hundred years before *that* MIRACLE, in the year of our lord, 1867, an intrepid group of former slaves heard the voice of god, and he commanded them to build a church. THEY FOLLOWED GOD’S VOICE HERE TO GAINESVILLE; AND HERE, WITH THEIR OWN HANDS, THEIR HEARTS BURNING WITH GOD’S DEVINE LOVE, THEY FOUNDED THE MOUNT PLEASANT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.

THEY PLANTED A SEED, WATERED IT WITH THE JOYOUS TEARS OF FREEDOM, AND NOURISHED IT THROUGH 150 YEARS OF TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS, POVERTY AND PROSPERITY, VICISSITUDES AND VICTORIES. AND THROUGH IT ALL, OUR CHURCH REMAINED STEADFAST IN ITS COMMITMENT TO KEEPING OUR CONGREATION VITAL AND VIBRANT AND RELEVANT IN AN EVER-CHANGING AND EVER-MORE-CHALLENGING WORLD. A CENTURY AND A HALF SINCE THOSE BRAVE FREEMEN PLANTED THAT LITTLE SEED OF HOPE, WE’RE STILL HERE . . . STILL GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPALS AND IDEALS OF THE METHODIST SOCIAL CREED . . . AND STILL DEDICATED TO OUR OWN CHURCH’S CORE VALUES*.* AFTER 150 YEARS, WE’RE STILL FULFILLING GOD’S COMMANDS, AND STILL CLIMBING JACOB’S LADDER. AND IF THAT’S NOT A MIRACLE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I DON’T KNOW WHAT IS!

NOW, REVEREND MCCLELLAN HAS REMINDED US OF THIS WONDERFUL PARABLE: *“AND JACOB DREAMED, AND BEHOLD, A LADDER SET UP UPON THE EARTH AND THE TOP OF IT REACHED UNTO HEAVEN. AND BEHOLD, THE ANGELS OF GOD [WERE] ASCENDING AND DESCENDING UPON IT.”*

THIS PARABLE HAS MEANT DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. ON A CONCRETE LEVEL, JACOB’S LADDER REPRESENTS GOD’S COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE, A TANGIBLE LINK BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH. BUT ON A SPIRITUAL LEVEL, FOR CHRISTIANS, IT ALSO REPRESENTS MAN’S CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO ATTAIN SAINTHOOD THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. AND I SAY “CONTINUING” BECAUSE — SINCE NONE OF US ON THIS EARTH IS PERFECT — WE ALL MUST CONTINUE TO CLIMB, CONTINUE TO STRIVE, CONTINUE TO REACH OUT TO TOUCH THE STARS OF GOD’S HOLY FIRMAMENT.

OTHERS HAVE SEEN JACOB’S LADDER AS BRIDGE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH. AND THAT’S ALSO TREMENDOUSLY RELEVANT TO THIS CONGREGATION. FOR CERTAINLY, PART OF OUR SACRED MISSION IS TO BUILD BRIDGES, TO REACH OUT TO THE OUTCAST, THE OPPRESSED, AND THE LESS FORTUNATE, AND BY SO DOING TO BRING THEM NOT JUST HOPE, BUT HELP. LET US BUILD BRIDGES WHEREVER WE CAN — WHEREVER WE CAN BE USEFUL, WHEREVER THERE IS A NEED, WHEREVER THE PROMISE OF A BLESSED LIFE IN HEAVEN WILL RESONATE IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE, PERHAPS, NOT YET HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD.

SO LET US, IN THE WORDS OF THE SPIRITUAL, *“RISE AND SHINE AND GIVE GOD THE GLORY, OH SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS.”*

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