

# THE PROJECT

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick,  
But when dreams come true, there is life and joy.*  
— Prov. 13:12

May 11, 2005

Dear Friends,

Over the past couple of years, we have written to you many times with sick hearts as we have battled to get approval from the City to build our auditorium. It has been a long, hard road. As I think back over this process, it's hard for me to even know how to sum it all up. There have been so many painful moments — neighbors accusing us of being evil and immoral, the Planning Commission repeatedly tabling our project, people telling us that this dream would never happen.

Yet this month, I can write and share news that is so fabulous it's still not quite real to us. **We have our approval to build!** The City Council voted to settle the lawsuit with us, we wrote up the settlement agreement with the city attorney, and the judge signed it to make it all official. It's really done! As of April 25, we now have a court order granting our site plan approval and our special exception permit, and we can move ahead with drawing up blueprints and building our sanctuary.



**Announcing  
the Settlement**

To explain how incredible this is, let me back up a bit... In early February, the City contacted us and expressed their desire to settle the suit we had filed on December 27<sup>th</sup>. They told us that negotiations would take only a couple of weeks and that they wouldn't go on and on with demands. After about 7 weeks of meetings, however, we were past frustration. We had agreed to change our plans again and again, and the City would say they were ready to settle, then come back with new demands. Finally, we told them we couldn't do it anymore; we couldn't cut out more seats without hurting our mission, and we needed to let the students who were planning on living in our building in the fall know whether they needed to find other housing. The City's response was that they were satisfied and would vote to approve the plan. The following Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, they approved the settlement with a 9-1 vote; our attorney and I and the various city officials signed it on Friday; and the judge signed it the next Monday. These settlement talks were another trying time in this whole process, but now obviously well worth the struggle.

On Sunday, April 24, we announced the news to our church and spent most of our service worshiping and praising God. It moved us to tears to see the congregation clap and cheer when I shared that we had our approval and then to hear them wholeheartedly praising God for what He had done. Though the road has felt long and lonely at times, it was so encouraging to see how all the saints were invested with us in the outcome. Their excitement and faith were overwhelming.



**The Worship Team led us in Praise**

We are still trying to let it sink in that after five years of working toward this goal — and praying and researching and not sleeping — *we now are only money away from seeing our dream come true*. Every once in a while, it sinks in that we have the honor of building a permanent mission among these students where God can be glorified for generations to come, and I can't even describe the emotions that follow. We are amazed that God has allowed us to be a part of what He's doing here in Ann Arbor — to see hundreds of students serving Him and getting to know Him and going out to influence the world around them.

We're doing our best now to take some time to celebrate and enjoy what God has done before we move on to the next challenge — raising the money to build. We would greatly appreciate your prayers, though, as we move into the next phase. Please pray that God would move people to give — that everyone who hears of the miracle He has done here will want to be a part of this project by giving as they are able. We will be hosting two celebration events within the next month to share more details of the settlement and invite continued financial participation. We would be honored if many of you would come!

We can't thank you enough for all your prayers these past months and years. Your words of encouragement, your notes, your prayers, your financial gifts, and your faith have strengthened us throughout this highly spiritual battle. Thank you for being a part of what God is doing here. We are excited beyond words to think of all He can and will do through this place of worship that He is allowing us to build.

Believing with you,  
*On behalf of the pastors and staff of New Life Church,*

*Steve Hayes*

*Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible.  
But not with God. Everything is possible with God."  
— Mark 10:27*



**Our staff team (minus a few) in front of New Life Church**