



A Labor of Love

A Brief History of Sunnyside Village Chapel

By Rev. Jarvis Hochstedler

December 2025

A Foreword

Luke 1:1 (ESV)

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us...”

Luke’s opening line could easily serve as the opening line of this account. It is a narrative of the things God has accomplished among us here at Sunnyside Village. Never could I have imagined, eighteen years ago, what this journey would become. Buildings may be made of wood, concrete, stone, glass and mortar, but this chapel, Sunnyside Village Chapel, stands as a witness to the faith, generosity, and commitment of an entire community. I have simply had the privilege of being along for the ride, and what a ride it has been.

I find myself echoing King David’s words in 2 Samuel 7, when he sat before the Lord and reflected on God’s goodness in bringing the worship center to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 7:18 (ESV)

“Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?’”

My goal in this document is to present an orderly account of how the Chapel came to be. How key people who sensed God’s leading and the many residents whose prayers rose before God like a sweet-smelling offering, were the moments where His provision became unmistakable.

My hope is that this narrative will stand alongside other records of the mighty works of God in this Village and that it will be only the first chapter of the greater work God continues to do among His people. A work where age is simply a number, and purpose has no expiration date.

Before continuing, I must offer heartfelt words of gratitude. First, to my loving companion and spouse of fifty years, Ruby. Being a pastor’s wife is never an easy calling. She has walked with me through every turn, every bump, every joy, and every sorrow. We are a pair, a team. She truly is my best friend, my strength, and my joy.

Second, to my former supervisor, mentor, and friend, J. David Yoder. He gave me space to grow, dream, and flourish in ministry at Sunnyside Village. His encouragement and guidance have shaped my life more than he will ever know. I am a better person and a better pastor because of his influence.

And finally, to the many residents of Sunnyside Village. Thank you for providing the soil out of which this amazing dream has grown. Your faith, your prayers, your generosity, and your daily examples of perseverance have blessed and strengthened me more than I can express.

Chapter One

The Beginnings

The chapel at Sunnyside Village has never been merely a room. Long before it had a permanent home, it served as a gathering point for faith, hope, and community. From Sunnyside's beginning in 1968, worship simply happened wherever space could be found. In those early days, services were held in the old Rest Home which is today's Manor. At other times, worship met in the activities room of the newer nursing home, now Shepherd's Landing and Team 3 of the Health Center. There was no dedicated chapel space. The congregation moved whenever and wherever residents could gather. It was humble, but meaningful. God met His people in borrowed rooms.

In 1999 the chapel finally found a more settled location in the Manor. It occupied what are now apartments 76–79, a space renovated through a donor gift by the Grehlinger Family. Before this renovation, the room had been the Independent Living dining room. After the Community Center opened, the old dining space was divided into two parts, one half for therapy and the other for the Chapel.

The setup was simple: podium, microphone stand, communion table with flower stands, a small sound cabinet, an organ, and an upright piano. These original furnishings now sit in Sadie's Prayer Chapel, along with the Thomas Kinkade *Stairway to Heaven* portrait that once hung behind the communion table.

It wasn't ideal. During Thursday Bible Study, a therapist might need to escort a resident through the "chapel" because of inclement weather outside. We would pause, smile, and continue. It was worship in a lived-in space both sacred and ordinary at the same time.

The Grehlinger Room seated around 50 people, and with some creativity, another 10–15 in the hallway. It was intimate, but it was holy ground. Prayers were prayed, hymns were sung, tears were shed, and faith was strengthened within those close walls.

During those years, Sunday attendance averaged 35–40 as most residents still attended their off-campus churches. But as many churches in the community shifted to contemporary worship styles, Sunnyside's traditional service began to grow rapidly. The Grehlinger Room soon became too small. Every seat was filled, including overflow down the hallway. Some residents even alternated Sundays with their neighbors, so all could attend. The calls for more space grew louder. Ideas were discussed, such as two services though that was too strenuous for our older volunteer base. Using Eicher Auditorium was a logistical nightmare with the number activities taking place within the space. The longing for a dedicated chapel building became unmistakable.

During this season, someone unearthed a set of old architectural plans for a chapel. They were drawings from years before that had been shelved due to low priority. Now the need was growing. Not a week passed without someone stopping me to say, “Chaplain, we need a chapel.”

I agreed, but the decision belonged to the administration and the Sunnyside Properties Board. Large projects move slowly, and the cost of a new worship facility had long been a barrier. My encouragement to residents was always the same: *Be patient. Pray. God knows our needs.*

None of us knew it yet, but God was already preparing two men, and a gift that would change everything.



Chapter Two

The Story of Bob & Ed

God has a way of bringing the right people into our lives at exactly the right time. You know, the people whose presence redirects the course of entire communities. For Sunnyside Village, two of those men were Bob Dierkes and Ed Brown.

Bob and Ed were long-time members of Grace Baptist Church in Sarasota. Each had served together on church boards, taught Sunday School and were pillars of their church community. Ed and Betty Ann moved into a duplex on Sattler Place in 2001. Bob and Sadie moved into a duplex on Grebel Lane in 2009. Bob retired from a long career in the government and Ed was the beloved principal at Riverview High School for many, many years.

I walked closely with both men through the passing of their spouses in the late 2000's. Through grief and shared faith, we formed a deep bond. Bob and Ed became travel companions, taking long road trips together each year. Those trips often stretched several hundred miles and gave them time to talk about life, purpose, and what mattered most.

It was on one of those trips that Ed asked Bob a simple, but life-shaping question, "What do you plan to do with Sadie's family inheritance?" Bob and Sadie had two children, however both had passed and neither left any grandchildren.

Sadie's estate had been set aside, waiting for something that would honor her memory. Ed suggested the money could become the seed for a new chapel at Sunnyside. A place where people could worship, pray, and gather in a way worthy of the community. That conversation planted a seed in Bob's heart.

In August 2010, my office phone rang. It was Bob asking if he could stop by for a chat. At that time, the chaplain's office was located where presently Guest Room #1 sits today, next door to the Marketing office.

Bob arrived, sat down, and after a moment of small talk, went straight to the point, "Chaplain, we need a chapel." He explained that Sadie's inheritance was substantial, and he wanted to give a significant portion of it to something meaningful, to something she would have loved. As we talked, he kept using that word "*significant*." Finally, I asked what he meant by significant.

Bob said the gift would be between \$250,000 to \$300,000. For clarification purposes, I do not know what the final amount of his gift was, but I do know it was a catalyst to move the chapel discussion off center and start the ball rolling.

I swallowed hard. That was indeed *significant*. Bob explained to me in the conversation that the money would be available for six months. He really wanted the process

to get moving. (*Unbeknownst to me until just recently, Bob actually submitted plans for a chapel that would fit into his giving budget.*) I assured him I would take this immediately to Executive Director J. David Yoder, who alone could bring it before the Sunnyside Properties Board.

In September 2010, the Board was informed of Bob's offer. Over the next several months, the discussion, planning, and discernment began in earnest. The chapel, a dream that had been "in the ground" for decades, was finally beginning to crack open and see daylight. For those of us aware of these early conversations the excitement was growing, but we kept the news quiet until the right time.



Chapter Three

The Great Reveal

Because Bob's gift was designated to spark community involvement, we knew early on this would be a partnership project. The Sunnyside Foundation, under the direction of Michael Smith, was brought into the process so residents who wished to contribute could do so. Their participation would ultimately become one of the defining features of the chapel's story.

An architectural firm of Noelker And Hull Associates (Chambersburg, PA) was hired in 2011 to begin shaping the vision into something tangible. I was invited into early meetings to offer input on the worship space. Though many details blur with time, a few of my requests were clear.

- Natural light was essential. No worship space should require artificial lighting to walk through and sit in during the day.
- The interior should highlight natural materials such as wood, stone, brick, and glass.

There must be a dedicated prayer room. It would be a space always open, always quiet, always available, no matter what else was happening in the building.

Noelker & Hull Associates surpassed every expectation. Their proposed design was more beautiful, more inviting, and more spiritually intentional than anything I could have imagined. From the moment one entered the building, the architecture drew you inward. The very design felt like an invitation to experience Christ more deeply.

As 2011 progressed, the plans matured, the funding strategy developed, and leadership prepared for the moment the wider community would learn the news. Great care was taken to keep everything confidential until the right time.

It was decided the right time would be Annual Corporate Members Meeting on the second Saturday of September 2011. Only five days before the meeting, my faithful office volunteer, Lucille Kendall, voiced her frustration again about the cramped Sunday services and the lack of a proper chapel. Lucille and I met every Monday morning, and this particular Monday she was especially pointed about the administration's inaction. All I could do was nod, smile, and say, "Lucille, keep praying. God will meet our needs."

I'm not sure she believed me, but she did a few days later. When the reveal happened that Saturday, Lucille finally understood my silence. She scolded me, lovingly, for keeping such a big secret, and I accepted the scolding with equal parts guilt and satisfaction. After all, keeping the secret was part of the miracle.

The reaction to the announcement was immediate and electric. Word spread across campus with contagious excitement. To be honest, I cannot recall what I preached that following Sunday, I only remember the atmosphere. The Grehlinger Room was overflowing, filled with joy, hope, and renewed energy.

Something extraordinary began to happen. Residents who had been discouraged, lonely, or even ready to "give up on life" found a new spark of purpose. Many told me they wanted to stay alive long enough to see the chapel completed. The project didn't just promise a building, it breathed life into the community. Suddenly the chapel was on everyone's lips. Conversations, prayers, and dreams revolved around it. The people of Sunnyside weren't just hopeful, they were united. The chapel was no longer an idea.

It was a calling.

A mission.

A shared vision that galvanized the entire Village.

And the real work was only beginning.



Chapter Four

The Real Work Ahead

With the chapel project now public, the excitement across Sunnyside was undeniable. But excitement alone doesn't build a building. Once the revelation was made in September 2011, the real work began. You know, the kind that required patience, planning, and a great deal of coordination.

The first major question was the most basic.

Where should the chapel be built?

A chapel isn't just a building; it is a symbol of a community's heart. Its location needed to reflect that truth. It had to be prominent enough to represent Sunnyside's mission and accessible enough for residents from every level of care. Several options were considered.

- The Community Center parking lot, offering a lake view
- The north parking lot of the Nursing Home (now the loading dock for the Health Center)
- Other open spaces around the campus

Each location had strengths, but also limitations. Gradually, one site emerged as the clear choice. The property occupied by the old Voluntary Service dorm and guest rooms, near what is presently the front of the chapel and parking area. It was central, visible, and symbolically strong. It was a location that spoke to Sunnyside's identity and purpose. Choosing the site was one thing. Clearing it was another.

The selected area was full of essential campus systems.

- Major water lines feeding the campus
- The central phone line hub
- The existing guest rooms

Before a single shovel could go into the soil, all of this had to be relocated. Behind the scenes, Campus Services Director Lynn Eby and his maintenance team took on the enormous task of choreographing each move. It was a complicated dance of demolition, construction, and utility re-routing. We were fascinated to watch Richard Dela-grange, long term Maintenance staff member, point out various underground utilities without even needing to confer to charts and maps. He had witnessed the installation of the utilities that now needed to be moved.

The first step was relocating the guest rooms. The decision was made to build new guest rooms beside the Marketing Office. However, that space was already in use and housed nursing home storage and the chaplain's office.

The solution required multiple moves:

1. Repurpose the Overholt House

For years it had been a rental property, but the tenant had already expressed plans not to renew, making the transition easier. The building was gutted, renovated, and reassigned as a centralized storage facility for the Nursing Home. It was a significant upgrade in organization and accessibility.

2. Relocate the Chaplain

My office was moved into an available room in the Corporate Building, right next to Executive Director J. David Yoder. We often joked that administration wanted to keep a close eye on the chaplain during these months and with all the moving parts, maybe they did!

3. Construct the New Guest Rooms (1–5)

Once storage and the chaplain's office were relocated, the old space was gutted down to studs. New walls, new bathrooms, and new furnishings were installed, giving Sunnyside its present set of guest rooms.

4. Prepare the Chapel Site

With the guest rooms moved and utilities relocated, the old Voluntary Service dorm/guest room building could finally be demolished. The land was cleared. The first glimpse of the chapel's physical footprint emerged.

Every step brought us closer.

While the physical groundwork was being laid, leadership was also discerning who would construct the chapel. D/M Constructors were chosen as the general contractors for the project. Their selection signaled that the dream was no longer theoretical. It was moving into concrete reality.

One unexpected benefit of the chapel project was the opportunity to update and reorganize essential campus infrastructure, particularly the phone system. Because all phone lines ran through the area where the chapel would stand, they needed to be relocated and upgraded. What had long been needed finally had a reason, and the funding, to be done. Once again, the chapel project became more than a building plan. It became a catalyst for broader improvement across Sunnyside Village.



Chapter Five

Planning, Funding, and Groundbreaking

The latter half of 2011 and the first half of 2012 were marked by intense planning, designing, relocating, and fundraising. A chapel does not simply appear, but it takes vision, coordination, and significant resources. During this season, Foundation Director Michael Smith became indispensable. He was an integral part of a comprehensive plan to fund the \$1.2 million project, drawing together gifts from multiple sources.

Funding included:

- Bob and Sadie Dierkes' original seed gift
- A major bequest from a former resident, designated years earlier for a future "significant community project" and this qualified
- Gifts from current residents and their families

A heartfelt thanks belongs to Michael Smith, Director of the Sunnyside Foundation and to every resident who invested in this sacred space. Funding came from multiple sources and when all was said and done, we entered the Chapel debt free.

Before a groundbreaking could occur, a long list of preparatory projects needed to be completed.

- Renovation of the Overholt House into Nursing Home storage
- Renovation of the old chaplain's office and storage area into Guest Rooms 1–5
- Upgrading campus phone lines to fiber optic, eliminating the old switching box
- Demolition of the Voluntary Service (VS) dorm/guest room building

A special note belongs here. The VS dorm had once been home to residents as well as guests. The final resident living there was Vera Hutchenson. When approached about moving into one of the new guest rooms — a space very similar to her studio apartment — Vera gladly agreed, happy to support the chapel project in her own way. She moved into Guest Room #5 in May of 2012 and lived there until her transition to nursing care.

With all completed, the path was finally clear. Plans were approved. The contractor selected. Sarasota County gave its authorization. It was time to break ground.



Groundbreaking Ceremony — June 30, 2012

The ceremony had been anticipated for months, and on Saturday, June 30, 2012, everything came together. Invitations were sent to residents, staff, Board members, Sarasota County dignitaries, sponsoring churches, and the local press.

Order of Service

Sunnyside Village Chapel Groundbreaking Ceremony

- **Welcome** – J. David Yoder, Executive Director
- **Hymn** – *The Church's One Foundation*
- **Invocation** – Lionel Nelson
- **“Legacy of Faith”** – Chaplain Jarvis Hochstedler
- **Resident Perspective** – Pat Myers, Resident Council Chair
- **Board Perspective** – H. Greg Lee, Board Chair
- **Groundbreaking Ceremony** – Sunnyside Representatives
- **Benediction**

“LEGACY OF FAITH”

(Groundbreaking for Sunnyside Chapel 6/30/12)

“Legacy” according to Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary it means “something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor.” The Scriptures put it this way, “Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments...” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

For 1000 years spiritual darkness had covered the known world. Little embers had been kept alive through the centuries with the help of Tyndale, Wycliffe, Gutenberg, Luther and many others along the way. On January 21, 1525, the smoldering ember was about to become a flame as it caught the oxygen of the Scriptures combined with the obedience of man. A despondent group under much persecution was seeking to follow the Scriptures more fully when they held a secret meeting at the home of Felix Manz in Zurich, Switzerland. These believers went to their knees in prayer for guidance. Arising from the prayer, George Blaurock requested Conrad Grebel to baptize him upon a confession of faith in Christ. Grebel did so, and afterwards Blaurock proceeded to baptize the others who were present. The legacy began to take hold and soon it was passed to generation after generation. In the mid to late 1600’s a Swiss farmer named Marcus Oberholtzer made his decision to follow Christ and along with other generations before him he continued in the legacy. In 1709 Marcus and his family left all in their Swiss village of Oberholz and carried the legacy across the Atlantic

Ocean and along with many other followers of Christ the legacy was established in the New World.

On October 28, 1901 in Daviess County, Indiana, William J Overholt drew his first breath and the great legacy was soon to find a new carrier. Will, like generations before him, made a personal decision to follow Christ and take Him as his personal Savior and follow Christ's example through believer baptism. A missionary spirit fell upon this young dairy farmer as he literally carried the message of Christ around the world. In the mid 1960's the call to start a nursing home to help the elderly began to grow in Will's heart. Looking first in the Virginia Beach area he found the situation was not favorable. However, in 1967 Will's vision merged with a similar vision of Lawrence Pamer a Sarasota contractor and in 1968 Will's piece of the legacy took shape in the form of Sunnyside Rest Home where those cared for would experience the love of Christ in both care and worship.

Why do I mention all of this today? Look around at the street signs here at Sunnyside and you will find Grebel, Manz, Blaurock, Menno and Wittmarsum all names tied closely to the legacy. Sunnyside has always maintained a deep sense of Christ's presence and today we take an even greater step to grab hold of the faith legacy that William J Overholt left to us and establish a worship center working in support and harmony with our Independent Living, Assisted Living and Health Care communities to provide for the residents of Sunnyside, Christ's healing love and care— in body, soul and spirit.

Mr. Dooly, as you and the men and women of your building crews arrive at this property each and every day—know that you are part of something much bigger than yourself as we all are. We have all been entrusted with our small piece of this great legacy. You must also know that your crews will be prayed for daily—for protection, for skill and as they step onto this property they will know there is something special here. It is not just a five century old legacy – it is a 2000 year old legacy that began when God sent His only begotten Son into the world that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (Chaplain Jarvis Hochstedler)

The Apostle Paul put it this way

1 Corinthians 3:9-11 (NKJV)

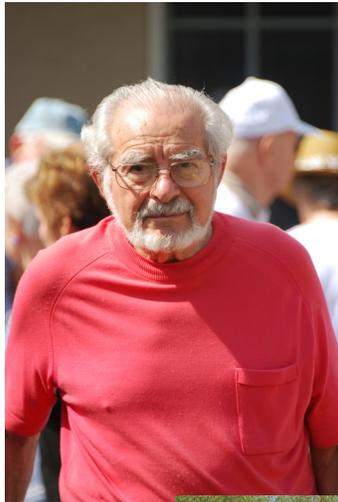
9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

It was a beautiful June morning — sunny, clear, and not overly hot. Though no official count was taken to my knowledge, a conservative estimate places attendance at over 100 people. The guiding hymn for the day, *The Church's One Foundation*, set the

tone. Christ Himself would be the foundation of this building. His message would be preached here. And all ministry flowing from this place would be rooted in Him.



Chapter Six

Construction Begins

Following the groundbreaking, site preparation gradually moved forward. Though I cannot provide a day-by-day report, several key milestones stand out.

The foundation work began in August 2012, but Florida's summer rains quickly created a challenge. Groundwater repeatedly collapsed the foundation trench as fast as workers could dig it. The solution required installing a system of 20 well points around the perimeter, connected to a pump running day and night to draw down the water table. The pumping continued well into early winter and caused roughly a month's delay, along with additional delays from heavy rains. But once the ground stabilized, construction could proceed in earnest.

Structural Highlights of the Chapel

Some of the key construction features include:

- Poured concrete floor with a fully reinforced stem wall
- 5/8" rebar tying together the footer, stem wall, and floor
- Six-foot-wide concrete bases supporting the gable ends to withstand hurricane-force winds
- 12-inch block walls, with a block cell filled with concrete and rebar every 24"
- A structure where roof, walls, and foundation are tied together as one unified system
- 14/12 roof pitch – meaning for every 14" horizontally the roof rose 12" vertically, otherwise, extremely steep
- Urethane foam insulation sprayed on the underside of the roof, eliminating the need for soffits and stabilizing attic temperatures
- A 10-foot air space between the sanctuary ceiling and the roof peak, allowing a full-length catwalk for HVAC and electrical access
- The 42-foot roof peak, the maximum height allowed by Sarasota County codes
- Steel stud interior walls

- A sanctuary front wall of cultured stone, chosen for cost and labor savings
- Extensive use of White Cypress for ceilings, trim, wainscoting, and window casings
- Impact-rated windows throughout, including protection over the stained glass

After enduring Hurricanes Irma, Ian, Helene, and Milton, the chapel has proven itself a true shelter in the storm. During Irma, 70 souls called the Chapel their haven from the storm. It was a memorial event to say the least.

Special Design Features

The Bible

One of the most important features of the Chapel is neither structural nor visible. Embedded in the floor of the platform, directly beneath the pulpit, is a Bible sealed inside a protective case. This Bible was signed in September 2012 at the Annual Members Meeting by all who were present. The signatures represented a collective pledge a declaration if you will, that the message proclaimed from the Sunnyside Village Chapel would always be founded upon the Word of God. Though unseen, it remains the truest foundation of the Chapel and its ministry.



Red Entrance Doors

The red entrance doors symbolize the blood of Christ. Each time anyone enters the Chapel, these doors speak to the sacrifice our Savior made for us. It was no easy task to convince the design person to paint the doors red. They didn't think it would fit with the color palate, but I persisted and they agreed it did indeed fit with the Chapel color scheme. It always does!



Stained Glass Windows

Very early in the design process, we envisioned including stained glass that would tell a story. A resident recommendation led me to Yolande Woodmansee of Aurora Art Glass in Nokomis.

Together we developed the three signature windows.

Jesus praying in Gethsemane, Jesus as the Good Shepherd, A rose window depicting the colors of the church year.

Pieces from the glass collection of Phyllis Plimpton (Azalea Place), sister to Revella Lee, were incorporated into all three windows. It was a personal touch tying the chapel to resident history.



The Sanctuary Cross

Deciding on the cross design proved unexpectedly difficult. Many worthy ideas were proposed, and even prototypes were built, but none felt quite right. Then, at a Christmas Eve service at Bayshore Mennonite Church in 2012, I noticed a small cross hanging to the side of their platform. That was it! It was the design we had been searching for.

Local craftsman Earl Beachy created a prototype, and the final cross. It was 14 feet tall, solid oak, richly stained and placed at the center of the stone wall. Its many edges catch the sunlight throughout the day, causing the cross to subtly change hue as the sun moves. It remains one of the chapel's most striking features.



Sadie's Prayer Chapel

This intimate space was intentionally designed as a scaled reflection of the main sanctuary. It contains the original chairs, communion table, and *Stairway to Heaven* artwork from the Grehlinger Room. This was Bob's desire for Sadie to be remembered and to preserve the spiritual heritage of Sunnyside's earlier worship spaces.

Cinder Block Legacy

During demolition of the old VS dorm, Lynn Eby salvaged several concrete blocks. Though they could not be used structurally, they were incorporated into the pillars of the chapel's front portico as a meaningful link between Sunnyside's past and its future.



A New Piano

The old upright piano in the Grehlinger Room had served us faithfully for many years, but as the new Chapel took shape, it became clear that

our music ministry needed an upgrade. The Allen organ would finally have a sanctuary worthy of its beautiful tone, but the piano was another matter entirely.

At that time, our musicians were Louise Blackwood and Dorothy Zeiset. Louise served as the principal musician, but the two shared Sunday duties and often delighted us with piano/organ duets. They were, for many years, the backbone of music at Sunnyside. At the writing of this history, Dorothy is 102 years old and living in the Health Center. Louise is 99 years old and a resident of Shepherd's Landing. Their faithfulness spans generations.

I cannot recall the exact date, but sometime during the Chapel's construction, Dorothy approached me and said she wanted to purchase the new piano for the sanctuary. I knew this was a significant undertaking; selecting an instrument worthy of the space, and of worship, would require thoughtful discernment.

In the winter of 2013, the three of us, Dorothy, Louise, and myself, drove to Pritchard's Pianos on Bee Ridge Road. Dorothy had entrusted me with a \$20,000 budget. It was an extraordinary act of generosity.

The salesman invited Dorothy and Louise to wander the showroom and play any instrument they wished. I quickly discovered how little I knew about pianos. As they played, they explained the tonal differences between models, the feel of various keyboards, and how sensitive each action was under their fingertips. I listened and learned as they explored the nuances of each instrument. After much consideration and deliberation, we selected the 5' Boston baby grand piano.

A few notes about this instrument:

- The Boston line is designed by Steinway, one of the most respected names in piano craftsmanship.
- It is the exclusive piano of choice at the prestigious Indiana University School of Music.
- When the Pritchard's salesman later visited the Chapel to evaluate how the Boston baby grand interacted with the room, he was genuinely impressed by the sanctuary's acoustics and affirmed that the match was ideal.

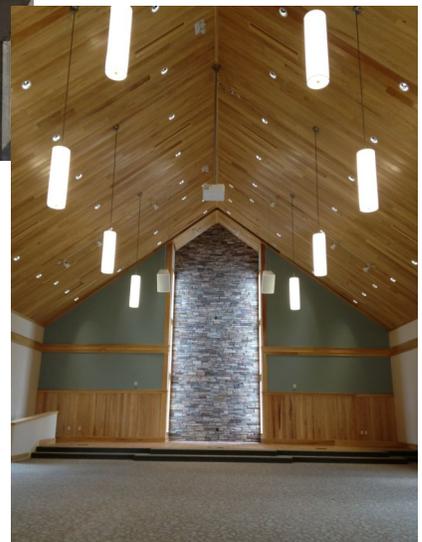
And, providentially, we came in exactly at the \$20,000 budget.

To Dorothy and Louise, you chose wonderfully.

To Dorothy, thank you for your extraordinary generosity. This piano has already blessed countless worship services, concerts, and special events. And it will continue to offer its melodious beauty to future generations who gather in this sacred space. It is, truly, a gift that keeps giving.







Chapter Seven

The Waiting, the Certificate, and the First Doors Opening

As with all construction projects, progress sometimes moves quickly and sometimes grinds painfully slow. Chapel construction was no exception, yet the forward march, even with delays, was steady and sure. By April of 2013, Sunnyside Village Chapel stood essentially complete. The furniture was in place, the lights were working, and even the piano had been tuned. From all appearances, we could have walked in and held a worship service that very day. Except for one thing.

We were still missing the all-important certificate of occupancy. The final document required before anyone could officially enter or use the building. It all came down to the fire inspector. With each inspection, they found two or three small corrections. The contractor fixed them and scheduled a follow-up. But each time, a *different* fire inspector came, and each one added *their own* list of issues. The cycle repeated itself; fix, reinspect, add more, repeat. After the third round of this, both the project manager and Lynn Eby were more than a little frustrated. By the fourth inspection, when a new inspector cleared all previous concerns and started adding fresh ones, Lynn and the project manager finally stood firm and said, in essence, "Enough is enough." It was not long after, the long-awaited certificate of occupancy was issued.

On Friday, May 3, 2013, Lynn returned from the Sarasota County Offices with the certificate in hand. It was mid-afternoon. Word spread quickly that the chapel would finally be open for residents to see. Around 4:00 p.m., the front doors were opened. A crowd gathered almost immediately. The sound that filled the space was pure delight, *oohs* and *aahs* echoing off the walls. People loved it. They wandered through every corner with joy, wonder, and gratitude.

A few months later, Bob told me privately that the chapel was "far beyond anything he had imagined." He said it wasn't even close to what he pictured, it was much more. "Sadie would have been over the moon," he said. *God is indeed good.*

In the weeks leading up to opening Sunday, I had many conversations with my resident volunteers about how we should mark the move from the Grehlinger Room to the new chapel. We all felt strongly there needed to be a symbolic connection, a way to honor the past while stepping into the future.

On Sunday, May 5, 2013, worship began for the last time in the Grehlinger Room. As you might imagine, it was standing room only, with people spilling down the hall and even outside onto the lawn. We gathered to thank God for the blessing of that little space. For fourteen years it had been our chapel home.

We sang an opening hymn.

We prayed an invocation.

We read a liturgy of gratitude.

Then, with full hearts, we carefully picked up the altar Bible, the altar cross, the Christ candle, and our hymn books. Together, as one joyful procession, we walked down the street toward the front doors of the new chapel. Under the portico, the congregation gathered and with one voice shouted, “Lynn, open the doors!” He did.

But before anyone crossed the threshold, I knelt at the entrance with my anointing oil. I blessed the doorway and prayed that all who entered would experience the presence of Christ in this place. I still pray that prayer today. We gathered in the new sanctuary, the message was preached, and fittingly, our first service concluded with the Lord’s Supper. A holy beginning in a holy place.

It had been thirty-four months since that first phone call from Bob Dierkes.

Thirty-four months of dreaming, hoping, planning, waiting, watching, and praying.

Now we stood inside the reality of that dream.

It was an emotionally overwhelming day — one I will never forget.



Chapter Eight

Dedication Sunday

As the Chapel neared completion, conversation naturally turned toward choosing a day for its formal dedication. We decided on a “soft opening” first, followed by an official Day of Dedication two to three weeks later. This allowed us time to ensure everything in the building functioned properly under real-world conditions. There is nothing quite like a full sanctuary on a hot day to test the air conditioning system.

As noted earlier, our first service in the Chapel took place on Sunday, May 5, 2013, and everything worked flawlessly. My personal recommendation for a dedication date was Sunday, May 19, 2013. It was Pentecost Sunday. It seemed the most fitting day of the year to dedicate a worship space, celebrating the Spirit Who breathes life into the Church. Choosing this date also allowed a couple of weeks to work out any unforeseen challenges before inviting the wider community to celebrate with us.

To this day, Dedication Sunday remains something of a blur to me. We began with our regular 10:30 a.m. worship service, centered around the theme of Pentecost. After lunch, which I am sure I ate but scarcely remember, I returned to the Chapel to prepare for the afternoon’s celebration.

The service became a standing-room-only event. Every seat was filled, including chairs set up on the platform. More than 200 people were present. For months, we had quietly wondered about the acoustics of the sanctuary. No one knew exactly how the room would respond once filled with sound. As the congregation stood and sang “To God Be the Glory”, the question was answered. The room came alive. The blend, the warmth, the resonance, it was breathtaking. I struggled to sing, overwhelmed by emotion. The hymn’s opening line captured what all our hearts felt, “To God be the glory, great things He has done.”

Since that day, nearly every musician who has performed in the Chapel has commented on its acoustical quality. Many describe the entire room as an instrument. One musician told me, “When I play in this room, I hear the whole ensemble around me, something that rarely happens anywhere else.” A few young performers have even returned to record audition videos for music school. These are testimonies to the intentional design and craftsmanship of the space. A place formed to enhance worship and beauty.



Words Spoken, Promises Made

Dedication Sunday included meaningful words from many voices:

- J. David Yoder, CEO
- Wade Harris, Sunnyside Properties Board Chair
- Diane Marcello, Director of Health Services
- Bob Dierkes, key contributor
- A reflection from Chaplain Jarvis Hochstedler
- And music led by Assistant Chaplain Lee Miller

But the most important words spoken that day came from the residents themselves.

Lucille Kendall, Ray Baker, and Helen Minke led the congregation in a responsive reading entitled—

“The Act of Dedication.”

Having prospered by the good hand of our God and supported by the grace and power to complete this house of worship to be used for His glory, we will now in His presence dedicate this building to Him.

To the glory of God our Father, from whom comes every good and perfect gift;

To the honor of Jesus Christ, His son, our Lord and Savior;

To the praise of the Holy Spirit, Comforter, and Guide into all truth.

We, the congregation and pastor, recognize a sacred trust has been committed to us.

Relying upon God for wisdom and strength, we do solemnly covenant together to guard,

uphold and perpetuate the scriptural doctrines and principles upon which this

community was founded. We commit to use this house as a safe place for the

assembling of all who seek God’s presence: for healing, for forgiveness, for strength, for guidance, for study, for peace, for comfort; and that all who enter this house will find a place to worship the true and living God.

With thanksgiving, we dedicate this place of worship to Your honor and glory. We received with open hearts and hands Your spiritual and material blessings. In the mighty name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

These were not casual words. They were vows and a pledge to preserve the Chapel as a place of Christian worship, grounded in Scripture, centered in Christ, and marked by love for one another. Just as I tell every couple I marry, vows are not to be spoken lightly. And so it was that day. We dedicated not only a building, but ourselves. That afternoon, we dedicated the

Chapel as a visible witness to the mission and ministry of Sunnyside Village. Nearly every visitor to campus sees the Chapel as they enter. It stands intentionally at the heart of the community, reminding all who pass by of our mission.

“The mission of Sunnyside Village is to honor God by enriching the lives of residents, staff and the community by providing homes, services and programs in a Christian environment.”

The mission begins with honoring God and ends with a Christ-like environment. The Chapel embodies both.

A special expression of gratitude belongs to Sunnyside’s outstanding marketing team. Darla Shrock and Julie Platt led the way with event promotion, brochure creation, and meticulous documentation of every stage of progress. An entire behind-the-scenes team proofed drafts, refined layouts, and ensured every invitation, program, and printed piece was flawless.

Local photographer Bruce Lehman, who had a long history with Sunnyside Village, diligently captured the events of the day. Many of his photographs still appear in chapel publications, including the opening and closing slides of our worship service videos. The iconic “sunrise photo” remains my personal favorite. Bruce’s work was offered not only with skill but with deep personal connection; his late wife, Sharon, had served faithfully for many years as director of nursing in the Sunnyside Nursing Home.



Chapter Nine

Additions Through the Years

From the very beginning, I carried a quiet hope and a dream I shared many times with J. David Yoder: to one day broadcast live Chapel events into every home on campus. It was a noble dream, but not a cheap one. In 2013, live streaming was still in its infancy, and at Sunnyside Village it was nonexistent. The cost of the basic equipment alone exceeded \$30,000, placing it well beyond our reach. But God has a way of preparing the path long before we know we will walk it.

A year or so after the Chapel opened, Manz Place resident Fran McCoy passed away unexpectedly. Fran had been a faithful and familiar face in Chapel worship for many years, all the way back to the Grehlinger Room days. Her memorial service was lovingly held in the new Chapel, attended by family who traveled down from the Orlando area. After the service, I expressed my condolences, assuming, as chaplains often must, that I would likely never see the family again.

Then, early in 2015, as I stepped out of the Chapel to run an errand, I nearly collided with the entire McCoy family, children and grandchildren. After warm greetings, I asked what brought them back to Sunnyside. Her son, Jim, explained that they were in town settling final details of Fran's estate. To my astonishment, Fran had left a \$10,000 gift to the Chapel, specifically earmarked for technology.

I thanked them deeply. Truthfully, I didn't yet know what to do with the gift. The Chapel was barely two years old, and technology upgrades were still financially and operationally beyond us. So, the funds were placed in the Chapel's Foundation account, waiting.

And waiting.

For more than two years.

In 2016 I was invited to co-officiate a memorial service at Sarasota Community Church. Pastor Roger Shenk opened by welcoming those present *and* those watching online. They were live streaming the service. The realization hit me like a ton of bricks. Immediately, Fran's gift flashed into my mind. I confess, it was difficult to remain fully focused on the service after that. My mind was racing with possibilities. As soon as I returned to the office, the research began.

To livestream we needed:

- A high-quality camera
- A computer capable of video processing
- Encoding equipment
- A streaming provider

Every spare moment was devoted to learning the equipment. At first, I envisioned livestreaming memorial services for families who could not travel. Then I realized, why couldn't we livestream every service? Every concert? Every event?

By early 2017 the plan was coming together, but one challenge remained and that was getting the settings to align. The computer settings, camera settings, encoder settings, provider settings, they all had to match perfectly. There is probably a sermon in that.

Despite weeks of effort, the breakthrough would not come. Then, on Sunday, April 23, 2017, after the morning service, I packed everything up and took it to my house. I needed quiet. I needed space. I set up the equipment meticulously, following my notes line by line. By mid-afternoon, everything was ready. I called J. David and asked him to connect to the test stream.

“Do you see anything?” I asked.

“All I see is a grandfather clock,” he responded.

“That’s exactly what you’re supposed to see.”

I did a little happy dance right there in the living room. Now the task was to get it all rebuilt, reassembled, and functioning inside the Chapel. On Sunday, April 30, 2017, we successfully livestreamed our first Chapel service.

When technology works, it is a beautiful thing. When it doesn’t... well, let’s just say we’ve had our share of headaches. But the reward far outweighs the frustration. Over the years, worship services, weddings, funerals, concerts, and special events from Sunnyside Village Chapel have been broadcast to family and friends around the world and to all fifty states, also to places such as Europe, Asia, the Middle East, India, and Indochina. The gospel of Christ has gone forth from this place, farther than we ever imagined.

And then came COVID. While churches everywhere scrambled to figure out how to record or broadcast their services, we already had everything in place. Not a single Sunday was missed. One silver lining in that dark cloud of isolation was that our campus informational provider, Touchtown TV, added a livestream feature to their platform in October 2020. The addition fulfilled a long-held dream. Now Chapel services could be broadcast live into every room on campus through either channels 195 or 103.

“To God be the glory, great things He has done!”

Over the past four years, the technology has continued to expand:

Additional cameras

A new sound board

Presentation software for lyrics and Scripture

A new sound booth, designed to blend seamlessly with the Chapel’s White Cypress décor

And most recently, the video wall

Every piece of equipment, cameras, computers, sound system, software, video wall, has been funded entirely through the generosity of Sunnyside residents. I know for sure if I begin to name everyone, I will fail miserably. You will have to forgive me this omission. Their generosity has gone above and beyond, ensuring the Chapel remains not only a place of worship, but a place where the message can be carried to far-reaching places.

Chapter Ten

Wrapping Up for Now

If you have taken the time to read this entire document, then you understand why I chose 2 Samuel 7:18 as its anchor.

2 Samuel 7:18 (ESV)

“Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?’”

David sat before the Lord with a heart full of wonder, remembering where he had come from. He smelled of sheep. His hands had been bloodied in war. He had lived in caves and fled for his life. And now he sat in God’s presence, overwhelmed by grace and gratitude. I cannot know exactly what David felt that day, but I know what *I* feel.

An old Indiana dairy farmer who once smelled of cow dung, carried grease under his fingernails, and bore callouses on his hands, has been given the privilege of witnessing the extraordinary workings of God through His people. I am humbled. I am grateful. I am blessed.

My prayer is that generations to come will look upon this Chapel as a witness to God’s faithfulness among His people. His blessing upon their dreams. His blessing upon their generosity. His blessing upon the mission and ministry of Sunnyside Village.

May this Chapel continue to testify to the profound uniqueness of this community of seniors in the midst of a growing, culturally diverse city. May it stand as a reminder that Sunnyside Village is far more than a senior living community. It is part of the body of Christ and a living example of radical generosity, loving care, and deep compassion for others.

The mission of Sunnyside Village is clear:

“To honor God by enriching the lives of residents, staff, and the community by providing homes, services, and programs in a Christian environment.”

I close with the ancient blessing of God’s people:

“The LORD bless you and keep you;

the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

With love and care,

Rev. Jarvis R. Hochstedler

Chaplain, Sunnyside Village

