

**We Would Be Building, by Bob Knowles, Daniel Kuhn,  
Andrew Maurin, and Becky Williams 16070916  
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 16 September, 2007  
Psalm 127:1-5 and Luke 6:47-49**

**D. Kuhn:**

Our Judeo-Christian faith is built around a God who is involved in building and construction. The very first words of the Bible describe God's creating and building the universe. This is the God of builders. Noah built an ark. Solomon built a temple. We heard the psalmist speak about building a house with God.<sup>1</sup> The prophet Amos used the image of a builder's plumb line to tell the nation Israel to keep its ways straight and just. Jesus spoke a few times about building a house on a proper foundation. His mission was to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. That kingdom is one of justice where everyone has an equal place at the banquet table. God wants all people to be present and that is why Jesus spoke about lost coins, lost sheep, and lost sons.

Each Sunday we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Habitat for Humanity is one example of building God's kingdom here on earth. It is a graphic effort to assure safe and affordable housing for all people. Bob, you've been involved for many years with Habitat for Humanity. Can you tell us some more about it?

**B. Knowles:**

I've noticed a lot of building taking place around Burlington, Graham, Lake McIntosh, and Mebane. This is good from economic point of view, but for the cost of one \$500,000 home, Habitat can build ten homes.

Habitat was founded in 1976 by Linda and Millard Fuller. I met Millard Fuller when he was a college student and I was a coordinator of the national youth conference of the UCC at Doane College in Crete, Nebraska in 1956. I recognized at that time that he had leadership capabilities. I learned twenty years later that he had begun the Habitat for Humanity program.

Millard was an entrepreneur who made money easily, becoming a millionaire before he was thirty years old. While he was successful financially, there was a downside to that success. He said of his wife, "She had every material thing she could want, but she had no husband. I worked all the time and we drifted apart."

Millard and Linda went to Clarence Jordan's Koinonia Farm in Americus, GA, and did some serious soul searching and Bible study. Matthew 19:21 had a strong effect on Millard. This is the story in which Jesus told the rich young man to "go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven." As a result, Millard and Linda stepped away from their possessions and founded Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat For Humanity has become the world's largest non profit housing organization in the world and has provided safe, decent, and affordable shelter to more than 750,000 people in more than 3,000 communities, with over 250,000 houses being completed. Jimmy and Rosalind Carter became involved some five years after the founding and their presence and participation gave the movement a tremendous boost in terms of name recognition and bringing in financial support.

On September 10, 2001, at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in Indianapolis,

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 127:1

Habitat marked the building of 100,000 houses. At that time, they set a goal of the next 100,000 homes to be built in the next five years. That goal was met.

There are many stories of Habitat successes. One of the most well known is that when Hurricane Andrew swept through South Florida in 1992, while hundreds of homes were demolished, all of the Habitat houses were left standing.

The genius of Habitat has been the establishment of local affiliates in communities all across the nation and around the world. Here in Alamance County, the local affiliate was initiated in 1987 by John Irvine, pastor of Elon Community Church with the help of Richard McBride, Chaplain of Elon College. In the spring of 1999, the seventh house was built in Burlington in partnership with Elon Community Church and Alamance Habitat for Humanity. In the intervening years, one hundred two houses have been built and dedicated here in Alamance county. The most recent house was built by our local United Way and was dedicated in a very moving ceremony earlier this month.

Bill Beyer and David Krueger Andes from our congregation were recently recognized for their participation in building houses in our area.

Another significant development was the establishment of the Elon College chapter of Habitat which received its charter in 1988. It is the thirtieth chapter chartered in the U. S.

At the close of the service, you will have the opportunity to support Habitat in this area. Students will be standing at the doors with Habitat paint buckets. You are invited to leave an offering for their work. While they're suggesting the contribution of \$1.00 per member, because Habitat for Humanity is ecumenical, bills of any denomination will be accepted!

#### **D. Kuhn:**

We have with us today, six of the one hundred-fifty students active in the University chapter. The two co-presidents of the chapter are Becky Williams and Andrew Maurin. Becky and Andrew, how did you get involved in Habitat for Humanity, what are the plans for the chapter this year, and how would you like our help?

#### **A. Maurin:**

Hello, my name is Andrew Maurin, and this is Becky. We are the presidents of the Elon University chapter of Habitat. We were asked to come by and speak about how we first got involved with Habitat and what our goals are for this year. I first started out in the organization as a sophomore in high school. My track coach asked me to come on a service trip to West Virginia because they had an empty spot. I had never really done service work before, but that trip sparked an interest in it for me. The building is what drew me in, because while I enjoy hanging sheetrock and roofing, it was even better to do these things in a way that would help others. Working with this organization has changed my core values in a big way and it showed me that I want to spend my life doing work that will benefit others. I cannot stress enough how important I think it is for young people to have these kinds of opportunities.

We were successful with the help of your generous donations last year in our goal to raise \$30,000 to fund the construction of a house for a local family. We begin this year with the same goal, but we hope to get the community outside of the college more involved in our work. With your help, I know we can help a family achieve their dream of home ownership, as well as bringing our school and the surrounding community closer together. Your donations give students the opportunity to volunteer and to discover service work, which

enriches their lives and the lives of others. Thank you very much.

**B. Williams:**

I have been involved with Habitat since my ninth grade year in high school. I got ‘habituus’ on a trip to Chiang Mai Thailand with my school for a week long build. We built the house of a family of three, and since then I have been involved with numerous Habitat events including another trip to inner-city Baltimore. I love working with Habitat for the many rewarding aspects of the organization. Not only is it personally rewarding to see the happiness of the owner’s faces when their houses are finished, but it is also rewarding to be able to work with the family on their own house. This past Wednesday the other Habitat members at Elon and I met the future owner of the house that our campus chapter will be raising the money for this year, and just that thirty minute interaction with them makes all of our fundraising efforts worthwhile.

I couldn’t imagine being involved with a better group of people here at Elon. This year, (and every year for the past seventeen) our chapter goal is to raise \$30,000.00, which is the cost of one home in Burlington. We strive to accomplish this through our many fundraisers on and off Elon’s campus. We would love for the Church to get involved by coming out to our Spaghetti dinner, which is tentatively set for the first or second week in November. Stay tuned for publicity about that event and we would love to see all of you there!

**D. Kuhn:**

Things like this are done on behalf of others. Many projects began because people had Jesus Christ in their hearts and were moved with compassion to make life better for their fellow humans. Hospitals, homes for the aged, and mission outreach are just a few examples of what followers of Jesus Christ have done.

Micah said, “Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”<sup>2</sup> As this congregation envisions the possible building of a new structure on our property, I challenge us to think about tithing whatever our portion of such a building might be, to construction beyond ourselves. Perhaps one tenth of what we raise could go to Habitat for Humanity to build a home in Alamance County. I also challenge us to field a crew of volunteers to help build the next Habitat home.

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<sup>2</sup> Micah 6:8