

The Soapstone Preservation Endowment *Partnership Challenge*

SOAPSTONE PRESERVATION ENDOWMENT

"Protecting and Promoting the History and Story of the Liberia Community"

www.Soapstonepe.org

In his book, **Einstein: His Life and Universe**, Walter Isaacson noted that Einstein *"loved humanity, but didn't like people."* While few of us measure well against Einstein's intellectual ability, all of us at times have issues with other people.

If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? James 2:16 (NIT)

This conundrum – *wanting to care; but all-too-often failing to do so* -- is portrayed well in the 2011 movie, **The Help**, set in 1960's Mississippi. In one scene the white women of Jackson are hosting an event to raise money to "send to the starving Black children in Africa." The scene from which the movie takes its name poignantly contrasts stated compassion and caring with stark reality. The event Chairwomen calls on all the Black cooks and waiters -- who are barely existing themselves, and who have worked to prepare and feed the participants -- to line up and be recognized. Once appropriately arrayed, the Chairwoman "honors" them with one simple statement -- "the help."

In our divided world, it is often easier to think about and even respond to others thousands of miles away rather than to see the needs of those just across the way. The *Partnership Challenge* was designed to give faith-based congregations, individuals/families, or businesses who wish to "offer more than warm words of encouragement" a simple and tangible way to do so.



*Aerial view of Soapstone Church & One-room School
The 7-acre site, now protected by a perpetual
conservation easement, includes the final resting
place for many of the freed slaves that founded the
Liberia Community.*

The people of the Liberia Community and Soapstone Baptist Church have persisted in the mountains of rural Pickens County, SC for more than a Century and a half. When the KKK burned their sanctuary in 1967, it was rebuilt in just one year as the members sold vegetables to pay for building materials with the pastor laying the blocks.

Membership has declined precipitously from the robust numbers of their first century. Mable Owens Clarke, the great granddaughter of the founding members who bought and donated the land that today boasts the church and its historic

one-room school, returned from Boston to aid her aging parents and her beloved church. **She cooked fish and fixings one Saturday each month for 10 months of every year for 22-years** to "earn" funds to support the small church.

With an aging congregation and changing area demographics, Soapstone is entering a whole new era. Thus, the Soapstone Preservation Endowment was created for the sole purpose of protecting and promoting the history and the legacy of these people of faith who have persisted against all odds.

The *Partnership Challenge* is simple and straightforward – any congregation, person/family, or business can “share the load” with the great folks at Soapstone with a gift of \$3,000 for the endowment. It can be made as a single gift or given in \$1,000 increments over three years. One hundred percent of funds go to the endowment with no overhead.

The first to meet the *Partnership Challenge* call, **Gap Creek Baptist Church** in nearby Greenville County, sits less than a dozen miles away as the crow flies. A small Caucasian church founded in 1840 and facing challenges of its own in a rural area with an aging population, Gap Creek wanted to “walk the walk” of caring about fellow believers nearby who need help as it continues its ongoing missions work with others around the world. **Long Branch Baptist Church**, an African American church with a long and rich history in nearby Greenville, was quick to respond when they learned of the need and opportunity.

The Soapstone Preservation Endowment Board humbly seeks like-minded people of all faiths and walks of life who share a heart for helping others in ways that are both tangible and with a measurable outcome. We seek not to ask too much nor to expect ongoing support beyond this single ask.

Just as Soapstone’s sanctuary was rebuilt “one block at a time” with your help we will reach this goal – one sister church and one gift at a time. Together we will forever etch the legacy of these inspiring and committed individuals who were and are Soapstone in America’s rich history of people of faith.

For more information visit: www.soapstonepe.org

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