

BEIT HAKAVOD (THE HOUSE OF GLORY) RESPONDS

In response to the article entitled “We’ve Given Them Ample Time: Canton sues to force repairs to historic Timken Stables building” in the Sunday edition of the Canton Repository dated March 12, 2023, there are several points we would like to make:

- 1a) There is no one who wants our beautiful building repaired and restored more than we, the members of Beit HaKavod Messianic Synagogue. No one! When one hears what the city officials say about us, one would get the impression that this ministry, which owns the building, is just negligent and/or doesn’t care to do the things to repair it. This point of view couldn’t be further from the truth. So many people have come to us or called to say how much this unique building captured their attention as they drove passed or saw it from the expressway and were compelled to check it out and take pictures. People, from all walks of life, have expressed an appreciation and love for this building, understanding that it’s an integral part of Canton’s famed history.

- 2a) Actually, the city wants to take our building away from us. The city officials have tried to coerce, pressure and intimidate us into forfeiting our building and land. There have been numerous suggestions that we sell and have even made an offer, through a surrogate, that we swap properties. They wanted us to trade our building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, with a building in a less desirable location, of lesser importance and value that once housed a church. In the City’s lawsuit against us, they are asking for a judgment of nearly over \$6,000,000, this is in addition to the estimated \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 that it will cost just to repair the roof. The Board of Appeals fined us \$20,000 plus \$1,000 per month for each violation. The City of Canton, on the other hand, is seeking a judgment of \$20,000 plus the \$1,000 *per day* for each violation from the date of the Appeals Board’s final ruling. In other words, in addition to the \$20,000 the city is seeking from us, they are also asking the judge to grant them \$5,000 per day for the five (5) violations, which add up to a grand total of \$6,115,000 as of today. Every day this total grows. Who could pay this? What ministry could afford to absorb such a penalty? In addition to paying such a large fine, the city is seeking to put a lien on the building and property.
 - b. In 2013, we participated in and was the highest bidder in the auction for the Timken Stables building. When the auction was over, a man approached us and said that he worked for the city. Whether on his own authority or on behalf of the City, we do not know, but he said that the city actually wanted the building, but couldn’t use city funds to acquire it. But if they were able to obtain it somehow, they then could use city funds to renovate and restore it. The knowledge of this brazen statement always stuck with us. We believe that the city’s interest has escalated due to the Hall of Fame Village (HOFV) becoming a reality. We believe that the City of Canton is showing all of its citizens what it prizes more. All eyes are watching – the city is doing everything possible to help the HOFV succeed, yet a small non-profit community service ministry they are suing to take away our land and building. Why not help us too? Why the disparate treatment?
 - c. If anyone should be suing anyone – it should be our ministry suing the City of Canton for denying us the opportunity and the ability to protect and preserve our investment. We own this building, but it has never has felt like it, the City of Canton has tied our hands for ten (10) years.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE:

- 3a) Immediately after acquiring the building, we paid thousands of dollars in back taxes, which unbeknownst to us, was owed by the previous owner to the county.
- b. The following Spring of 2014, we began patching the roof of our building with tar and sealant on the dome portion of the roof. We also began replacing missing shingles on the lower portion of the roof, triaging the most critical areas first. We were stopped by a city official, who claimed that we were not allowed to do any temporary repairs to the roof, being that none of the roofers were licensed nor was there a permit pulled to do such work.
 - c. A year later in the Spring of 2015, we began patching the roof again, focusing our attention mainly on the NE section of the lower roof. In addition to the roof repairs, we painted some interior walls, replaced and removed worn carpeting, added foyer lighting, began removing unwanted items and debris from the interior of the building, placing these things in a large construction dumpster we had rented. We also painted the outside entryway, added new lighting to outside entryway, removed the dilapidated wood fencing that enclosed the patio and put a new roof and framing on both the outside bar and pavilion. One day while we were working, a city inspector happened by and told us that all work had to cease immediately. He said that no permits were pulled for the work, inside or out, and that we wouldn't be granted permits, because again the workers were not licensed.
 - d. Then in 2017, we began a Community Campaign of Companies who might want to volunteer their services and/or goods as donations for the upgrade of our building. We contacted Carter Lumber seeking a donation of lumber and supplies. We contacted churches and volunteer groups of men and women who offered labor and food tents for workers. Marsh Belden initially offered to provide slate for the roof and Belden Brick offered to donate brick to replace those worn from weather on the outside of the building. The Architect, whom we are working with, found a roofing company to do our roof, one that specializes in complicated roofing, of which ours is a candidate, because of its convex and concave shape. Because of the cost factor replacing such a large roof was high, we decided it best to do it in stages or sections. We met with the Canton City Building Dept. and other officials and explained our plan of doing the roof in sections consecutively. Their response to our plan was "no to everything"; that it cannot be done in sections, but has to be "all or nothing at all." It was estimated a few years back that the cost of repairing the entire roof would be around \$500,000, which was outside the realm of possibilities for us. As a result, we could not move forward with our plan, so the Campaign of Companies had to be stopped.
 - e. In 2018 we did it again. We could not wait for the perfect scenario to avail itself to us. We had to act and do something, whatever we could as a congregation to help our building. This time it was not the roof or work on the interior, but instead our attention was focused upon the exterior of the building. We caulked and painted window frames, painted the barn-like doors around the building, replaced some of the missing or heavily damaged soffit area underneath the overhang of the roof. Once again during an inspection, the inspector informed us that the work we did amounted to nothing when compared to the larger picture. We were ordered to stop work and would be fined if we did anything more to our building and could possibly result in jail time. Also in 2018, Kelly Parker, Asst. Prosecutor for the City of Canton Law Dept., told me, Heidi Lancaster, that there is one local ministry making the majority of the complaints. Mr. Parker told me, "They want your ministry shut

down. This husband-and-wife team make repeated calls of complaints and they get their congregants to take turns calling.” We know exactly who it is as Mr. Parker revealed this information to an officer of the court. But we choose not to name them.

- f. On August 30, 2019 when Scott Winkhart, Fire Safety Inspector, issued the citation, he proceeded to tell Mark Lancaster “There will most likely be a hearing in Columbus where they will hear our case, agree with our findings and grant you an extension of 30 days to address the violations. You don’t need to go, but if you do choose to attend, you won’t be able to say anything in your defense.” Mark Lancaster had no reason not to trust what he was being told, because before retiring from the Canton City Fire Dept., he worked with some fire inspectors. The day of the hearing, Heidi Lancaster decided to attend the Appeal Board’s hearing. On her way to Columbus, she decided to call the number of one of the contacts, because she had a question. She was told that the hearing is not in Columbus at all, but rather was in the Ashland area of Reynoldsburg, Ohio. She immediately turned the car around trying her best to get there on time. As a result of the confusion, she arrived late to the hearing where she saw three (3) men leaving: Scott Winkhart, a Building Safety official and their attorney. She found out who the other two men were when she went into a lights-out courtroom and met Executive Secretary, Susan R. Steer. She informed Heidi that she had missed the hearing. After explaining that Scott Winkhart had told her husband that the hearing would be in Columbus and that it was no big deal and that he didn’t need to go. Susan Steer said, “That is very interesting, because he sat right there and told the committee that Mark Lancaster wasn’t even interested enough to show up for the hearing.” Scott said that before the hearing began. Whatever his motivation, lies were told and deceit was used so that we would lose. We have learned that we cannot trust him anymore.

g. **These Past Ten Years:**

- i. There has been no abandonment of the building even though we have been forced to vacate. Lawncare is done on a weekly basis, utilities are maintained and are current and the Muskingum Watershed taxes are paid and are current.
- ii. Numerous contacts were made asking for help and direction: Greg Hawk, City Councilmen of our ward; Thomas West, Ohio State Representative at the time; John Kasich, former Governor; Mike Dewine, current Governor (Heidi attended monthly meetings in the Governor’s office for non-profits); Letter sent to President of the United States, Donald Trump detailing our issues with pictures. (None of the aforementioned individuals have offered any help or direction). Mary Cirelli, former Canton City Council Person and Ohio State Representative, whom Heidi recently reconnected with after 35 years. She was the one who brought her to the City Council to make her presentation to save the Timken Stables from the wrecking ball. She is now advocating for us and fighting against the continued corruption in the city.
- iii. We have been renting a storage for the past ten (10) years as the Fire Dept. said we were not allowed to store anything in our building.
- iv. We have sought funding from foundations, but they will not give for two reasons: 1) We are religious in nature 2) We choose not to be 501(c)3.

- v. We, Beit HaKavod Messianic Synagogue, are not a 501(c)3 organization, but is recognized by the State of Ohio as a non-profit organization. As a Non-profit Ohio Corporation, we are legally tax-exempt and 100 percent tax deductible on all donations. The federal government just wants you to think that all ministries have to be a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization. We do not want that kind of government control, which uses a “gag order” for a ministry or minister not to exercise their First Amendment Right of free speech. Now, more than ever, is the time that we feel the need to speak out, not necessarily about political matters, but biblical things which appear to be political. How effective can a ministry or minister be if they are muzzled by the government? Thus, if we continue to not be 501(c)3, there are no monies to be had from federal or state grants, foundations and charities. Those foundations classified as 501(c)4 can only give monies to a 501(c)3 organization.
- vi. We have had an ongoing fundraiser on behalf of our building, which we’ve posted on our congregational website since 2013. Our last service in our building was November 30th, 2019 when we were told to vacate by the City Canton Building Dept. We continue to have services on our property, that is, on that patio, in the spring through the fall. In 2020, we began a fundraising campaign, which we highlight by placing large signage of our fundraising efforts at both entrances to our building with good visibility. This is more indication that we have not abandoned the property.
- vii. December 2019 through March 2020, we rented a banquet room at the Hilton Garden Inn until the outbreak of COVID caused us to stream our services live from our home. We, like most congregations, did this for one (1) year. March 2021 through March 2023, we leased a space at 4410 22nd St. NW, Canton. We posted signage on the congregation’s doors on 13th St. where we were holding services. March 2023 – current, we just signed a lease to share space with Whipple Heights Church at 4900 12th St. NW, Canton. This is evidence that we are not defying the order to vacate the property at 2317 13th St., Canton issued by the Building Dept., by holding services there.
- viii. A security system, with an alarm and cameras are monitoring the building 24/7 at 13th St, which people know as the Timken Stables.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NEXT:

- 4a) Today, Wednesday, March 15, 2023, we received the summons from the court. We will file an answer immediately. We want our “day in court,” unlike the scheduled hearing at the Appeals Board. We want to correct the record with evidence of what we have done and what we were denied to do. We will ask the court: 1) Remove the unobtainable and unreasonable penalty and fines put upon us 2) Allow the roof repair to be done in sections consecutively. Since we can all agree this is the number one safety violation.
 - b. We are going to speak at the Canton City Council Meeting this coming Monday, March 20th at 7pm. Asking again, this time as a group, for any input or ideas from our great city leaders.
 - c. Organize a campaign again in order to elicit the help of the entire community, affording them the opportunity to get involved with this awesome restoration effort. We have a vision of 36 years, that as of yet is unrealized.

- d. We have a fundraiser that is being offered to us by Robert Kroeger, historian, painter and author of “Historic Barns of Ohio” and “Round Barns of America” in which our building is featured. Mr. Kroeger will paint our building while speaking of its history. Preservationists come from all over to attend his fundraisers. He believes this is his God-given mission, to bring attention to these beautiful structures for renovation and restoration.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ARE ASKING: WHO WE ARE? – THE MYSTERY REVEALED:

5a) We like to say that we are “Born-again, Spirit-filled, Torah observant followers of Messiah Yahshua (Jesus).” Mistakenly, people have the idea that since Messianic believers (just means to believe in Messiah – nothing too mysterious about that) continue to embrace all of the Scriptures (both Old and New Testament), somehow, we are only focused on the “Old”. Honestly, following in Messiah Yahshua’s footsteps, doing what He did, teaching what He taught, doing what His disciples did and taught years after Yahshua’s resurrection and ascension. How much more “New” Testament can you be? We embrace a Biblical Judaism, which is strictly from the Bible and taught by Messiah Yahshua, not the Rabbinical Judaism which has much of their interpretations from the Talmud (Oral Torah). In the same way that we adhere to the biblical precedent, we reject those things of Christianity, which have no basis in Scripture, but have roots in Paganism. I was once told by a rabbi, “Heidi, you can’t have the best of both worlds.” That is exactly what we have.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO:

6a) With our city’s help, rather than a hinderance, we have much bigger plans to be a “Great Presence” in our community, besides the ministry work which we are already doing. We hope to be like a modern day “Underground Railroad,” with our Historic Landmark Building, as the hub of this rail system. Many, if not all ministries and places of worship could be connected, working together in unity for a greater cause. The word Canton, which is the name of our city, means “division or section”. For many years ministries have lived out this word, being in competition with one another only to fuel more divisiveness or division among themselves. This is a “new day”, we need to come together – One in Messiah and make our city of Canton a prototype and model for other cities to follow. In 2007, we began working with the Stark County Health Dept. and the Red Cross of Stark County to form a coalition of places of worship for the purpose of a crisis or major disaster. This effort was put on the back burner (shelved), due to the lack of interest and participation of local pastors and ministers. Rabbi Spitzer and I, Heidi, were the last to continue the meetings. All of the numerous ministries in Stark County – separately we do great things - but imagine what we could do.... together!

WHAT YOU (THE COMMUNITY) CAN DO:

7a) Please go to our website: www.beithakavod.com and give to our cause, email how you would like to get involved or an area to volunteer when the time comes. We encourage you to read the section on the “Miracle”, which will give you a broader understanding of the importance of this prophetic place on 13th Street. We encourage everyone to come and join us for our Worship Celebration every Saturday at 10:30 am at our temporary location: Whipple Heights Church 4900 12th St. NW, Canton, Ohio. We can be reached by phone at (330) 288-YHWH (9494) or email at rabbi@beithakavod.com. Together, help us save “The House of Glory”.