

Building Churches

By JONATHAN PHILLIPS

My father, who is a Methodist Preacher, runs into Rev. Claude Wilson, another Methodist Preacher, from time to time at the sorts of affairs Methodist Preachers go to.

If my memories from Rev. Claude's Vanceboro United Methodist Church services are clear, my old man would do well to seek some advice from him.

I seem to remember Rev. Claude having to implore the congregation from time to time to chip a little extra into the collection plate to help pay off the church's building fund. It looks like Rev. Arthur may be doing the same thing, and could probably use some advice on how to go about it.

The Swansboro church Rev. Arthur ministers to is building a new Sunday School addition and fellowship hall. It is costing more than a little bit. In addition to having to use my old bedroom as an office while half the church is torn up and having to deal with all manner of technical difficulties holding services in an unfinished church, dear old dad has financial worries that run into six figures.

We all have faith that even if all the bonds don't get sold, the people will come up with the money from somewhere. They'd sure better, or I'm out 250 big ones for the bond they conned me into buying.

While Rev. Arthur worries about broke-down furnaces and unsold bonds and disputes with architects and engineers and trying to work when you can smell the meat loaf and taters cooking in the other parts of the house, he can take solace in the fact that it could be worse.

When I used to live out River Road in Washington, one thing you always saw on the way to my house was a big slab of concrete with bare steel girders braced above it, and miscellaneous debris strewn about. A pile of cinder blocks grew slowly but steadily smaller as opportunistic but dishonest passersby liberated

them to build makeshift bookshelves or support house trailers.

Out front of the unfinished shell was a sign that read "Future Site of the Something-or-Other-Church."

In two years the only thing that changed was that somebody came along and painted over the misspelled work, making it a "future" rather than a "furture" site. This occurred only after some insensitive newspaper type published a picture of the incorrectly spelled sign (who, me? I plead the fifth. Fifth amendment, that is—not fifth of whiskey, which has gotten the blame for other errors in judgement.)

So far as I can tell, Swansboro's work is already much farther along, and with no signs of giving up, than the Poor Old River Road Church.

Yeah, Pops, things could be worse.

Rev. Bob South, the former Vanceboro pastor, got sent to an Episcopal church in Heartache and Hunger Creek, Georgia, to fire up their building program. Having stupidly lost Rev. Bob's letter on the subject, I can't remember the details. But beggin' the Georgians' forgiveness if I've got it wrong, they had been holding church in the Sunday school building for a decade or more while supposedly raising money to get a new sanctuary started.

Rev. Bob got 'em moving again, and no sooner did he get Heartache and Hunger Creek walking the straight and narrow construction-wise than the Episcopalians sent him elsewhere to do the same thing.

Another approach to the stresses of church-building besides thinking about how much worse other folks' building program have been is to simply look on the bright side.

Example number one: At least they aren't tearing the church down. That's what happened to Vanceboro's Catholic Church, whose building I am not

alone in thinking was perhaps the most distinctive in town. (For those readers who live out in the boonies of New Bern or Kinston or somewhere, there's a bank there now.)

Example number two: At least when you get a house of worship up, there will be relatively little danger of having it reduced to rubble, unless the artillery boys at Camp LeJeune spend too much time on Court Street before shooting practice.

Father Frank Gill is a Navy chaplain attached to the Marines who, along with Rev. Arthur, presided over the "I do's" when yours truly tied the knot. By now, Fr. Frank has left his Post at Cherry Point and is on a ship bound for duty in Beirut, Lebanon.

Now if ever a place needed the good Lord's help, Beirut does, but cold hard economic risk analysis tells you that starting a building program in Beirut is not one of your smarter moves. A tent and some sandbags is about the best you can do.

I will not ask you to chip into the building pot at the Swansboro United Methodist Church, unless you happen to be a member of that church.

What I will suggest is that if you have a few bucks to spare once the rent is paid up and this month's pick-up truck payment check has cleared, you contribute to your church's building program, if it has one.

It will save you from meeting in a cramped Sunday school building for 10 years. It will save the public from the depressing spectacle of watching a half-finished church building rust away and get all its cinder blocks ripped off. It will make it easier on you, perhaps, at judgement day if you gave it to your church instead of buying beer, pornography, or video games.

And finally, it might save some wear and tear on your preacher. Just ask Rev. Arthur, Rev. Claude, and Rev. Bob.

Farming

By LELA BARROW

In writing pieces to be published, sometimes you can't think of a subject to write about. Then you have to invent one, or tell something you've done years back. You remember I wrote about having typhoid fever in the fall of 1909; had to give up my school at Cox Mill.

In January 1910 a teacher resigned from Tucker School five miles from Winterville, in the Renston District. I was asked to finish that school year; also to teach the following year 1910-11. I accepted and boarded at Mr. Bennet Speight's. He was the "Father of Speight Seeds". It was a big farm, nice home and nice farm houses. At this time Oscar, Louis, Alma, and Belo were all there. Today Alma Speight Tyson is the only living member of that family. Eighty years of age. She went to school to me—so did Belo.

Thomas Carlyle quote: "Blesses is he who has found his work," "Without work he enjoys, he can never know what happiness is," "Know thy work and do it."

I don't know of any farmer these sayings apply to any better than Bennet Speight. He loved his work, he loved his family. He didn't only superintend his farm—he was out there working like a hired laborer. In the spring the very choicest tobacco seed, saved the fall before, were planted in well prepared soil. He watched his crops grow and marked the best plants or best patches to save seed to plant. He picked the cotton that he saved the seed from so he would have the best. People went to him for tobacco seed at this early date.

One of the hardest jobs was harvesting the corn—pulling the fodder from the stalks and tying in bundles to feed the horses and cows, next pulling the ears of corn and throwing them in the wagon, pulled by mules or horses, to be hauled to the barn and unloaded. During my school term there they had a "corn shucking." The neighbors all came to help shuck a big

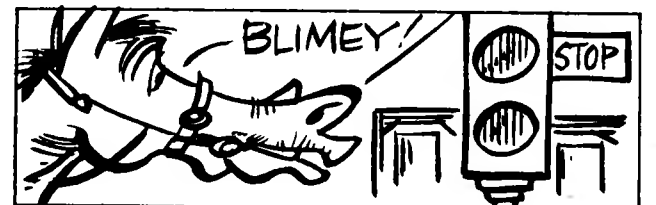
load of corn which was dumped on the ground outside the barn; we either had to sit on the ground or on the corn. We had lanterns to give light. The nicest biggest ears, that were filled out top to bottom were thrown on a separate pile to be used for planting—the other ears were thrown into the barn. The shucks from this corn saved for feeding the horses.

Oh yes—this was like a party—story telling, eating apples, parched peanuts—a big family affair having fun—enjoying their work. Exodus 34:26 "Thou shalt bring the best of the first of each year's crop to the house of the Lord your God." Therefore to give God the best, you have to watch it grow and harvest it for seed planting. In that way God can multiply the crops back to us each year.

People who think farming is hard, back-breaking work should remember all the nice equipment that has been invented for their use—all the motor vehicles being used today. A man with a harvester can go in a field and harvest as much corn in a day as it used to take weeks to gather. Soy beans, peanut, peas all back-breaking crops can be done so easy. In breaking ground, in the spring, a man with a horse or mule to plow the ground—morning 'til night, think of the steps he had to make each day. Now a man, on a tractor, can do so much more—see the difference?

The Bible speaks to us of farming in many places. Here are a few: "Son, go work today, The field is the world, The seed is the word of God. The sower soweth the word of God, Sow not among thorns, Blessed are ye that sow."

It is only through labor and prayerful effort and resolute courage that we may succeed and gain better things.



The world's first traffic signal was installed outside the British Houses of Parliament, London, in 1868, decades before the automobile was invented.

HIGHLIGHTS

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