

LUMBER RIVER CONFERENCE

by Jason B. Lowry
a Member of
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a step further and say "my conference?"

When the writer of this article was much younger, the Christian feeling was tender, loving care as it should always remain. But, one must remember at times this is a cruel world we live in. We have had two churches in the Hopewell Community for all of my life, oh, within about one-half mile of each other. Some years ago the thought came about that the Christian strength of a united church would be stronger and with more power in the community to do God's work. However, there were enough older people at the time to control and train the youth to stay within tradition, not necessarily malice and hate, but to keep other people from "running our church." There is an old verbal saying about the "blind leading the blind." We have about accepted this

way of life relative to who is running whom. You have noticed perhaps that God has been left out of this running business and as long as He is, as we grow in numbers, we may need the more church in years to come to make sure the "church runners will have a church to run." On some occasions, one will speak on the difference of "control" and "development" of one's life. Development is a real necessity for a person to grow in Christ-like living. Therefore, at all times we should strive for unity, to be large and powerful in the Lord as a large bay tree stands by the river of water of life. We need numbers, strength, money (tithes, another paper) and the Will of God united on Earth as we will be in Heaven.

Psychologists claim that some people never grow up to be adults. Unfortunately, there are many people in the world who are mentally sick. Doctors claim that this type of sickness must be treated as other diseases are treated. Sometimes the reason for churches splitting up

could very well be a case of their members not being capable of growing into adult life, not knowing, causes one to be afraid. Trained electricians are not afraid of electricity because they know how to act and perform with it. Many of us are afraid of electricity and we better be until we know how to deal with it. People who only know the power of running a church on Earth, would be afraid of large numbers and resources that would tend to control their play house or destroy it.

There are a lot of interesting history revolving around the origin and development of the LRC in Robeson County and the history as it is related now may never be told if we wait too long to have the information first hand.

Going back to our subject of why there are so many churches in Robeson County? The Sunday afternoon while Old Main in Pembroke was burning, we observed the fire sitting in our automobile parked on a side of the street just in front of the building. We recognized "Chuck"

Griffin, Associate Dean of Students of Pembroke State University on top of the building helping direct the fire departments doing their job. "Chuck" was a good worker for PSU, and is now deceased, a real Christian man who made these remarks. "Pembroke for a town of its size has more church buildings than any other town I know." ... "I must have counted at least a dozen or fifteen church steeples from the top of Old Main. This within itself carries an important message about people and their religion. Biologists use to term "Mitosis" when ever a cell develops to certain stages, the cell divides into halves to form more cells. It would be an interesting task and a good piece of research to find out just how many churches there are, and their history in Robeson County.

There was also an academic Dean of PSU, Dean Moore who lived in the community about this same time. He was originally from West Virginia and the Pennsylvania area, made this remark, "the Pem-

broke area is the most hypocritical area that I've ever lived in." He claimed that he had looked around for a church that would fit his needs and was not able to find one. That brings on an interesting thought, do we build churches to fit people's needs, or is it for needs we build a church? Anyway, Dean Moore is deceased also and let's hope that he finally found his church in Jesus Christ.

For us to further develop this subject of why have so many churches, we must study and know something about the people, their religious family background, their emotions and their economic living standards. What are the fundamental basic principles of educational experiences in their homes? If you please, what kind of religious experiences do we have expressed in these homes, rural or urban, educated or non educated? How long has it been since a lot of these people looked on the inside of a church building since they were there at a family func-

tion? Your thoughts are probably right that these are not the people generally who begin a new church. It is the Christians that "split up" and move on to a new location for another church and some of the non-going church people may join them. If you study and look at people as social beings, we naturally fit into our environment with less strain and stress. A poor, uneducated Christian person would not feel as comfortable worshipping in an economically rich educated audience in a city church. Let's be realistic, most people attending church, dress in their finest clothes, drive the best family automobile, while a lot of us cannot afford all of these things. Then, the minister, may Lord have mercy upon him, trying to deliver a message that will hold the attention of the young children, middle aged, and the elders of the church. The children are restless not knowing what is going on, the middle aged are observing the children on one hand and on the other hand, we elders 'aking a mid-day nap. The circumstances and situations of religious practices could very well cause considerations for people involving them selves with new or other churches.

As mentioned earlier in this report about educators from other states making an evaluation of people's religion in this area cannot allow us a short length of time the religious and educational background of the people of Robeson County. We have had to deal with three or four races of people, religious, educational, social and economically. These assessments are not always easy to make in light of religious freedom this country claimed so strong in our founder's names. If a group of people learn to love worshipping together in a particular setting of their own, we cannot take the position of judging their success and aspirations.

The growing number of churches the sinner man on the street claims as his primary reasons for not attending church somewhere is not a valid excuse. We must be real careful of our observations, with the help of the Lord that anything in these Conference reports say may not be construed to enhance any sinner's position. The observations observed by the remarks made by the sinner man on the street with little known formal education along with statements made by two top educators in a university setting is in contrast with how social being evaluate various circumstances of religious practices. If this subject could be researched fully taking on many aspects of people and their religion, there probably will be less recommendations at the end of this paper on how to avoid having so many church buildings than any of the subjects attempted. Really, what are some of the main reasons why churches split up? One reason why they should not split up is because their present building generally is not over crowded. If any of you know of any over crowdedness, we could very well use one hundred or more members of Hopewell Church, one mile from Elrod, N.C.

Another problem that seems to stand tall, particularly among our Indian people in Robeson County is the emphasis placed on names. For example, family names, church and school names, and for the most part our Indian names. While none of us had anything to do with our parental selection, if we were born, we inherited the situation of family names, religion, schooling and the name of the race just as other people did. When I was born, I automatically was characterized as a member of the Lowry family, the Lowry family were church goers, school teachers, farmers, Methodist, Indian, and technically confused with the circumstances.

Yes, there are a lot of conditions that go to make up why we have so many churches in Robeson County. From 1900, the date of the origin of the Lumber River Conference, up to the end of World War II in 1945, I finished high school in 1938 under the name Cherokee Indian and that was the name of Pembroke State at that time (CNS) Cherokee Indian Normal School. When I found out that I was not a Cherokee, by state law, how else would a

high school boy say to the people other than take my name and any other than you might want to put with and you know exactly what you may do with them.

Well, alright, for religion I thought these many years 1982 that I was a Methodist, now by all official records, I am a Holiness Methodist whatever that is. I assume the Lumber River Conference is controlled by the Doctrine and Discipline of the Holiness Methodist Church. We are acquainted with our Holiness church in Pembroke and other Holiness churches in the area. We also know some of their strong beliefs, not to use tobacco in any form, the women do not use facial makeup. After having their soul saved, usually at revival services, one returns to his master for final sanctification, etc. Each church usually is a member of a religious denomination that has a religious doctrine controlled and operated by a constitution or a set of by-laws. As it is presently stated, one could very well be confused since there are two churches in the area, Holiness, and Holiness Methodist Church. If a Methodist church is a good, does holiness make it better? Or is it somewhat like a dead bird shot after he died, does it make him more dead? Possibly, the term Holiness Methodist means consecrated, spiritually perfect or pure, untainted by evil or sin. It could be construed to mean a part of the doctrine of Pentecostal Holiness Church.

So, what difference does it occur to you about all of this? Just to point out how we have a lot of religious and political campaign rhetoric that has little or no meaning to the listening audience.

Today, as ever before, we find this world to be really beautiful, exciting every day we live. It should be this way. If we find ourselves rather dull in church work, may be we could revive ourselves in helping someone else build them a church for a happier work for the Lord.

In brief, our educational system in Robeson County required more buildings for administrative staff because of the many races of people, than any other county in the state of North Carolina. A lot of questions of inquiry about who are you?

With caution and beware while reading any history recently written by a writer who is paid for his services. The band wagon of confusion has been around for a number of years, religiously, economically, social, due to circumstances, however, it is a real challenge for one to keep a level head to bind oneself closer with their Christian brethren to form a stronger church within the community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
To speak about the various great institutions of the home, church, education, social, and economic to strive for development of each one to have a better community to study, work and play.

In several years to come, we very well could use at least two more name changes that would serve a worthy purpose. Lumbee Indian to American Indian, Pembroke State University to University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In name Lumbee is a restricted area name while American Indian is non-restricted. In consistence with the other named universities in North Carolina, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Boone, Asheville, Cullowhee, and Greenville. Pembroke State University sounds restricted to the area while the University of North Carolina at Pembroke gives a broader connotation as the other universities. We seem to enjoy by name to have our minds restricted to Lumber River and to the town of Pembroke. This also applies to our religious restriction of our minds not leaving the bounds of Robeson County.

By virtue of our country founded on the principles of religious freedom it should remain the prerogative of any group of people to build a church wherever and whenever the arrangements are possible. Shall we all take the position to strengthen the three greatest institutions that we know, the home, church and school?

NEXT TIME, THE HISTORY OF THE LUMBER RIVER CONFERENCE

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