

Good News

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Lightning strikes in Lincolnton

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At about 9:30 p.m. on April 20, 1991, a Saturday evening, lightning struck Emanuel United Church of Christ on Main Street in Lincolnton. What could have been the loss of a historical building turned into the resurrection of a refurbished sanctuary for the community.

Though fire fighters were on the scene at 9:47 p.m. and contained the fire to the roof and attic, there was quite a bit of water damage to the interior of the church.

"As the fire chief put it, it was a glorified attic fire," said the Rev. Blaine Edele.

Since that night, the 150 congregants have been meeting in the fellowship hall in the rear of the building while construction crews top the chapel with a new roof and repair and renovate the interior sanctuary.

Thanks to a provident decision to change insurance carriers three weeks before the fire, tragedy was waylaid in that the new coverage is a total replacement package up to \$5 million. The church's previous carrier only insured a total blanket coverage of \$325,000. The expected cost of the repairs is \$600,000, according to Edele.

Edele tells the story of a similar accident that oc-

curred in 1953 when a violent wind and rain storm blew off the top of one side of the church's tower. Rain did a considerable amount of damage, also. But the coincidental part of the story, and the humorous side, according to Edele, is that the church had changed insurance just before the accident occurred. Edele chuckled and said that they would have a hard time changing insurance again if they wanted.

The new insurance carrier is the United Church of Christ Insurance Advisory Board and Atlantic Mutual Co. is the underwriter. With the new insurance, all of the stained glass windows can be replaced at a cost of \$75,115, whereas, under the old insurance, only \$50 per window was allocated.

Edele said the church has also received \$6,000 in donations from private sources to help with the renovations.

Some improvements are being made, such as a heating and air conditioning system, replacement of the bell tower roof, upgraded organ, a sound system, upgraded piano and improved attic ventilation.

Edele praised the insurance company saying the agent for western North Carolina was on site within 24 hours and the claims

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