

## New Life Family Church turns \$150,000 into \$2 million facility

DYLAN LLOYD

dlloyd@kingsmountainherald.com

In the movie "Field of Dreams" a voice tells Kevin Costner's character "If you build it, they will come." And so goes the philosophy of Pastor Robert Eng, who along with a few friends in fellowship have turned \$150,000 into a \$2 million church.

The New Life Family Church on Oak Grove Road recently outgrew itself, so the congregation asked Eng if it would be possible to build a new one. After mulling over a number of costly estimates from out-of-town contractors, Eng had a realization. He and his congregation would build the church themselves.

"All a church is is faith, and the rest is trusting in God, as I have trusted him to build this church," said Eng.

Many generations ago it was the people, not a contractor, who raised a church from the ground up. And so it would be for his people to muster up their own time and sweat to build the church. Eng, being a former contractor, said he never worried about the enormous task failing.

"We're in the miracle business, and it's about blind faith," said Eng. "This church is to be a hospital, one for miracles, one for healing the souls of those who need healing."

Eng and his band of builders started with an empty slate. They relied on faith, and in the first few weeks faith brought them \$100,000 worth of carpet and tiles and \$30,000 worth of sheetrock.

Later donations, such as a half-dozen \$300 ceiling lights from Gaston Memorial Hospital, would help them begin to piece the new structure together.

Eng, along with volunteers such as Kelly Kowalczyk and Hugh Brittain, used old tiles and cabinets from the Shelby Dynasty Restaurant to decorate the interior. Doors and side panels from the old Belmont Pharmacy were donated as well. Countless volunteers from the church donated their time to help fashion them into the emerging hall of worship.

"Everyone that has given their time and talents to this ministry, God has blessed them measurably," said Eng.

To lay the foundation for the church, Eng ordered \$85,000 of concrete, knowing very well that the money might not be there. Toward the end of the day when the crews were done pouring in the concrete, a stranger came to the church and handed Eng a wad of cash, saying that God had told him to do so.

Eng said the man had been taken by the Holy Spirit, even though he was not a Christian. The money the man gave would

help to pay the workmen for the concrete floor.

As construction continued, the congregation received more offerings. Cabinets and glass, panels and doors, fixtures and faucets were either donated or salvaged.

The entrance way to the church was furnished with a steel-canopy roof from an old gas station said to be worth \$30,000. Eng purchased it for \$5, then adorned the cinder block pillars that held the roof with stones he had collected from local mountain sides.

"This is a building about people," said Eng. "First you build people, then you build buildings."

The building his people are working on is shaping up quite well. The new church has marble walls, a cafe, and an 18-foot high mirror engraved with the image of Christ. The glass mirror, which rises from the pulpit in the front of the hall, will be equipped with a water pump to create a cascade effect during services.

Much work remains to be done to complete the project. The parking lot has yet to be paved, but members believe it will be when God wills it. The New Life Family Church expects construction to be



DYLAN LLOYD / HERALD  
Pastor Robert Eng inspects a door for his new church building's office. The door was labeled junk before it was donated for the church. Below, a glass portrait of Jesus, carved with acidic chemicals, will hang in the new sanctuary.

finished in April.



### Activities set at Central Methodist

Central United Methodist Church has scheduled numerous services and activities.

A sweetheart dinner is scheduled for Saturday night at 7 o'clock.

Sunday, youth will lead worship at the 8:45 and 11 a.m. services. The community kitchen is open each Monday at noon and each Thursday from 5-6 p.m. All persons needing a meal are invited. Tutors are available after the meal on Thursday to help children with homework.

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### MEDITATION

## Things that matter take work

My wife and I will celebrate our 22nd year of marriage on the same day that our oldest son is scheduled to graduate from



Jeff Hensley  
Meditation

Kings Mountain High School. It sometimes amazes me how the years have passed so quickly. I met my wife in church. She was the pianist for a church my family and I joined when I was 14 years of age. We began dating three years later and we dated for four years before we were married. I enjoy telling this story whenever Valentine's Day rolls

around. Of course, married life hasn't always been easy. When is it ever? A colleague of mine once told me about some marital problems some of his neighbors were having. The problems were the result of several issues. This husband and wife were from different cultural backgrounds and

had different religious histories. They also had financial pressures, job difficulties and headstrong personalities that caused their marriage to be a volatile one. According to my colleague, this couple had separated on more than one occasion, but each time they decided to give their marriage another try.

One day my friend was working in his yard when the wife came out to bring out some garbage. As she walked back up her driveway, she paused at the fence and spoke to my friend about her marriage. This was one of several times when either the husband or the wife availed himself or herself of my colleague's wisdom. At first, he simply attempted to empathize with their feelings and offered bits of advice. But then one day he had a brainstorm.

The next time he spoke with his neighbors he smiled and said, "What an amazing love story you two have!" The couple looked puzzled at first, but my friend went to say, "You two have been through hell and high water, and here you are still committed to working at your relationship. That is certainly an inspiring example of what love is all about."

Smiling weakly, the couple brought their conversation to a close and went inside, but though very little was said at first, my friend soon noticed that there was a different tone when he talked with his neighbors about their marriage. They didn't stop seeking his advice, nor did they stop telling him about their problems, but they did begin to start telling him about what they were doing to try to resolve those problems. Though their struggles continued, it appeared that their whole attitude began to change. Where there was once only despair, now there was hope.

Years later, not long after their 25th anniversary, that wife took my friend aside and said, "When my husband and I were going through a hard time, most of our friends were expecting us to divorce, but you praised us for our 'love story,' and that simple thing made all the difference."

Most meaningful relationships are difficult, but then the things that matter usually take the greatest amount of work.

Jeff Hensley is the pastor of Kings Mountain Baptist Church.

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Office: 824-1 East King Street • Kings Mountain, NC 28086  
E-mail: heraldnews@kingsmountainherald.com

Gary Stewart (gstewart@kingsmountainherald.com).....Editor  
Dylan Lloyd.....Staff Writer  
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