

Tribute To Our Forbearers

by Gene McCoy

We will soon celebrate the fortieth anniversary of this congregation's existence. As the years pass, so do those who witnessed the birth of this body. Although few of us have been involved from its inception, all of us are grateful for the faith exhibited by those who began this work.

Based upon the experience of most congregations contemplating a building proposal or the establishment of a new congregation, we can easily imagine some of the obstacles they faced.

There are always emotional issues involved. Our congregation, for example, was born in the environment of an emotional upheaval resulting from theological or doctrinal differences. As it turns out, the decision to part ways from the original group has been validated and justified by their continued departure from Biblical teaching and practice. We are grateful for the strong convictions and wise foresight of the leaders who led the congregation through that emotionally charged era. It was the right decision.

Forty years later, I think it is safe to say there is no lingering emotional stress. There are emotional issues to overcome when a congregation elects to abandon its present building in favor of a new structure. There are many memories that live in church buildings. Whether it was a wedding or a funeral, a baptism or a special event, the buildings in which they occur grow in sentimental value.

Forty years ago, a group of faithful men and women experienced that emotional withdrawal when they

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launched into a building program to create a meeting place for our congregation. We honor them for persevering in the cause of expanding the Kingdom of God despite the emotional drain upon them as individuals.

Then there are financial issues involved. I wonder if there has ever been an occasion when a congregation proposing a new building did not have to respond to the objection that "this is not a good time to build." Concerns about the economy have always plagued proponents of progress. Even though median income in the mid-60s was increasing, we can easily imagine that there were strong reservations voiced about the proposal to build a church building to house this fledgling congregation.

Added to concerns about the economy was undoubtedly the concern about the limited number of people upon whom this enterprise depended for financial success. It was a handful of people who, forty years ago, stepped out in great faith and personal financial risk to establish what we can easily take for granted.

Forty years later, this congregation is completely debt free and is contributing 21% of all income to worldwide evangelism. Several young people have attended Bible college. Mission trips have broadened the perspective of the entire congregation to match that of the Lord Himself. Some have gone out from this congregation to be involved in vocational ministry. The huge risk and investment forty years ago has paid great dividends!

As we approach the October 8 celebration, let us give thanks to God for richly blessing this congregation. In your prayers of thanksgiving and praise, please remember to thank God for the people whose faith was greater than their fear forty years ago. Then ask God to so work in your life that you develop and display similar faith when challenged with seemingly impossible opportunities.