

PREFACE

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

We used to sing enthusiastically, “How Big is God?”. It has been 35 years since we entered our Meetinghouse to worship. I am 80 years old with wonderful memories of God’s working in answer to believing prayer. I am writing at the request of a number of people whom I respect. They felt that a record of such answers to prayer in the 1980’s might provide encouragement to this generation, and those to follow, that God is real, personal and mighty.

Perhaps this may add to the testimony of saints of the past. Times may change, and the world changes, BUT our God remains the same toward HIS servants who trust in Him.

CHAPTER 1

A HUGE ROCK

The huge gray rock sat there defying us to try to move it. It was a result of limestone rocks which had blocked builders on these three lots for most of a century. It was without cracks or seams, and moved only under the force of large equipment. It had been rolled aside, as it was too large to be removed.

What was to be done? A sizeable sledge hammer was purchased and put to use pounding the rock. Over time, cracks occurred and pieces broke off, and a great lesson was learned by the men of the church—time and consistent effort will accomplish the seeming impossible.

What were the results? The handle of the sledge hammer fell apart and the rock was reduced to about the length of an economy car. Finally, a bobcat, with the assistance of three men, was able to move the remaining rock out of the way.

Time and consistent effort were key words in this project of building by faith. At first, I was disturbed by the five years that the project took until I discovered that George Mueller had spent the same amount of time building one of his orphans' homes, and seven years on another.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that persevering faith is what God desires. He is a "rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Patience in prayer without passivity or frustration will see results—a much needed lesson for us in our day.

CHAPTER 2

BEGINNINGS

The church organized in August of 1977, renting Halfway Firehall while we looked for property. In April of 1978 we had purchased our smaller white chapel and soon saw we would need to add on to it for needed space. The porch was enclosed and helped with additional Sunday School space as well as Children's Church.

When we approached the city about the possibility of our adding on to the chapel, we were denied more than 30-35% additional space. The existing property was zoned "industrial" and thus no leniency was given. Meanwhile, we used a school bus parked on our property for much needed additional space.

In several years the three lots across the alley, facing Ridge Avenue, were for sale. There was little to make them desirable as they were rocky, trash-strewn lots—a virtual neighborhood dump! The

owner, a contractor, had decided the rock issue was too big to make the lot usable for building.

After much prayer, we felt led to approach the contractor about the land. Upon bringing it to the church in a business meeting, the congregation felt we could not afford it and voted against the purchase.

Shortly afterward, serious sin between two members of the church was discovered and dealt with. This led to an exodus of several leading families. At the next business meeting, the congregation came to the conclusion that God could afford that land and we would trust Him. We obtained and paid for the land in less than a year.

The congregation made a major decision that we would not go into debt to build. Instead, we would pray and build by faith, as God provided materials and money.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN

Realizing we could not build near the chapel because of zoning, we looked across the alley where the zoning was residential. Here it would be possible to build. We considered the required set-backs and found the maximum size and location for the building of a church structure. Thus, we decreased our plan by a few feet for safety and decided on a 50 ft. by 90 ft. house of worship.

Our purposes were:

- 1- More space
- 2- Multi use of space
- 3- Simplicity of construction
- 4- Adequate for growth and/or decline

5- An appearance to fit in the neighborhood as well as reflecting our values and priorities.

A logger and friend of the church, Don Webb, who lived in upstate New York, suggested we use wood for the framing. The large ledge of rock on the lots made a difficulty which was solved after prayer. God brought to our minds how this was solved on mission fields—where pillars were used to create a level floor. This also helped deal with the slope of the lot.

Thus we planned a two story building with a fourteen feet deep balcony in the auditorium for extra seating as well as future Sunday School class space.

The first room planned was a Prayer Room with both inside and outside entrances for availability 24/7. For this we prayed, then marveled as God gave us more than we expected.

We planned to do as much of the work as possible ourselves to cut costs. Shortly we had official plans drawn and approved by the city.

CHAPTER 4

LUMBER

We had prayed for funds to buy lumber from the Lowe's store a few miles from our building. Soon it became clear that God's way was different from and far superior to ours.

I received a phone call from Don Webb who had located a farmer who had a "woods" which might meet our need for lumber.

I planned a quick trip (600+ miles round trip) to talk with Don and David Davies, the farmer. We prayed much at Prayer Meeting, asking that the trees would be on the north side of one hill as that provides better lumber and it would be

easier to cut the trees. We also considered Psalms 50:10 and 95:4,

“For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.”

“In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also.”

Being satisfied that God was leading and believing that He would arrange logistics and provide finances, I went to New York.

The trees were on one hill, on the north side of that hill. Mr. Davies asked how we planned to finance our building program. I explained and he asked if I had ever heard of a man called George Mueller. The answer was, “Yes!”

He was ready to part with the trees and I offered him stump price. It was then that he informed me that I had misunderstood. He was giving us as many as we needed!

God continued to show HIS wisdom and direction. Shortly, another friend, Ed Tangen, a builder, offered to help while he was on paid medical leave. He took a copy of our plans and made a list of the lumber that would be needed to complete them. He then examined the trees available and offered to saw the boards we would need for framing in his small sawmill.

We sent volunteer labor to help Don Webb cut the logs. We then paid to have them moved to the sawmill and prayed. Ed had a cousin who agreed to transport the lumber from upstate New York to Hagerstown with his own truck and flatbed. We paid the driver a small amount for his time, but the cousin refused payment for fuel, fees, and use of his truck. He claimed that he wanted greater blessing from God on his business.

Mrs. Gearhart, a widow in the church, offered us use of the back of her land for the green lumber to season.

Five truck loads, one at a time, arrived about midnight. Each was unloaded by men of the church and friends and

stacked under the lights hung in the orchard trees.

It was later hauled to the building site by pickup trucks. The total cost of all the framing lumber was less than \$1,000.

Besides all of this, Ed had given us a log of fine oak and several pine logs to be cut for use as trim. The framing lumber was all of hemlock.

Where God guides, He provides. Faith still works.

CHAPTER 5

Permit to Build

The day came when my wife, Carolyn, and I went to city hall to obtain a building permit. After much prayer about this unknown process, we went, trusting God for the unexpected.

Finding the correct office, we entered, looking like Pastor and wife. They

asked if they could help us, and I answered, “I hope so. We want to apply for a building permit.”

They brought out the application form and the fun began. Several questions followed.

“Who was our contractor?”

Unprepared, I answered that I was the contractor and prayed that they would not ask about my license and experience.

“How much was the expected expense?”

We responded that we didn’t know.

“How much would we be borrowing?”

We told them, “Nothing! We are building by faith, and God has already given us the framing and trim lumber.”

They had neglected to ask for my credentials and now did not ask how much we had in hand. Prayer and faith still work!

They said they needed a number for our anticipated expense to determine the cost of the permit. I asked them to select a proper number considering what we planned to build.

Now it was their turn to be perplexed. I do believe the lady took mercy upon us.

She asked for our site plan, and I asked, "What would that involve?"

Would you believe that the city worked up a plan for us? It required grading; parking requirements; commercial blacktop; rain water management, including a stone pond; tying our two properties together; and more. Knowing that where God guides He provides, we believed that God could care for all these details. And He did, at a later date!

After several visits and much prayer we received a proper building permit for our project.

CHAPTER 6

Works and Faith

“Faith without works is dead.” James 2:20.

There is a time when faith requires work. Works without faith is the world’s way. Faith with works is God’s way.

Knowing this, we set out to plan our work and work our plan. Based upon faith, we established a Building Committee of

three men with backgrounds in building: Dennis Marquis, Paul Hawbaker, and Ben Eby. The latter two came to weekly planning sessions.

Our organizing plan was prayer meeting on Wednesday, early morning breakfast on Thursday to plan, working on Monday evenings, and working once a month on Saturday. We added to this our special prayer meetings, nights of prayer, and occasional weeks of prayer. By faith we would build.

We planned the long range, mid-range, and one week basis.

Others helped with advice, searching for best prices.

We established early on that building would NOT take priority over God's work of the church and Kingdom. Giving to missions and evangelism were highest priorities. Mission works in New York and traveling to preach, teach, and encourage missionaries were more important than a building. Was

our God not big enough to oversee His work on several fronts at once? Of course He would, through our faith in Him, and He did!

There was no internet to use, no Google, or youTube. I read the BOCA codebook and asked advice wherever I could.

We asked the city building inspectors to come by any time they had suggestions on how to make the building stronger. We did not want to just pass the minimum requirements, but rather, to exceed them.

When the task seemed to be overwhelming, we considered the magnitude of our God who was in charge. Often, we would humorously ask, “How do you eat an elephant?” The answer is simple, “One bite at a time.” Our task was to care for the immediate matters and watch God work!

CHAPTER 7

OPPOSITION

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:” I Peter 1:7

Real faith fears no fire. Any work of faith will have opposition of one sort or

another. Read Job, Ezra or Nehemiah. Study the lives and experiences of those in Hebrews 11. Consider the life and ministry of Paul. Examine the life and ministry of Jesus.

It takes fire to purify faith. We did not lack such to help our faith. Many friends and family expressed their doubts and questions. Scoffers and critics existed as we heard that God no longer worked as in days of old.

Some encouraged us on such a noble experiment. (Faith is more than an experiment.) An evangelist clearly stated that we must cut back on missionary work and church planting to have needed laborers and funds to see the project through. The building must become our center priority.

Two area pastors said such a process wouldn't work in our day. We needed to go to a bank, borrow the money and hire someone to construct the Meetinghouse. They told of others who had started in a

similar fashion and then saw the church decrease and nearly close.

One well-meaning contractor came to assist on a Work Day. He told us one wall was a mite out of plumb and we needed to tear most of the walls down and start over as they would never hold up. Thirty-five years later they still stand.

These observations of well-meaning folks helped us pray more and seek to please our great God.

Our brick mason said the walls were not a problem and he regularly worked with far worse. A building inspector said he wasn't used to seeing such timber for building and such solid construction.

God gave us peace as well as determination to build above the minimum requirements. It seemed many of the lost watched to see what our God might do for us in a visible way. To God be the Glory!

CHAPTER 8

THE FOUNDATION

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Psalm 11:3

Foundations are crucial to the safety of a building. We wanted our foundation to be solid.

We talked with the masonry contractor from whom we had purchased

the land. He showed us ways to do much of the work before he would come to help us.

We first located a transit which we could borrow. Realizing that we would need to step the footer, we set to work. Using some high school and college math, we were able to lay out the corner posts and dig the trenches. A father/son team came with equipment and dug the footer much quicker than expected.

In the process of some grading we were surprised to find some of the “immovable rock” began to move! They asked whether we wanted to continue digging inside the footer. Our proposed crawl space might become a basement on the lower end of the slope! We prayed as they worked. God then showed His power. Our 90 by 50 feet building was the maximum size that could fit in the area where rock moved with the exception of one corner. That corner has been a reminder of God’s mercy. This gave us potentially about 4,000 square feet of extra

space for little extra cost! It has since proved invaluable. Rock outside the perimeter would not move and we only needed one stick of dynamite to put in the footer. We marveled at God's plans to keep the lots empty, yet reserving a spot just over 90 by 50 feet on which to set our building. We still don't know whether He did it at the time of Creation or during the Genesis flood.

We are thankful that God hears and answers prayer, when we are trusting Him.

We made adjustments in the plans for God's gift of space. With an oversized footer we set to praying for future guidance.

CHAPTER 9

BRICK

In our planning, we decided to do the tasks we could and hire what we could not do. Putting up the brick seemed to call for higher skills than we had.

Mr. Canfield had been a help to us by selling us the land, helping with the foundation and laying of blocks on the

footer. He made an offer on laying the bricks at a price we could not reject. Even so, we faced some real issues requiring much prayer and faith.

Before we were ready financially, he asked if he could start. He had other jobs already set up and wanted to put us first. We again explained our principles and our shortage of funds. He responded that he would work and bill us later. IF we were short then he would carry it on his books until we could pay. He wanted to put his men to work IMMEDIATELY! It was so kind and we were troubled at the accepting of such a plan if our faith failed. We settled on his crew starting as desired. We would pray and see if God would increase our present faith and provisions. We would let them work on a basis of daily brick count and our supply of money. My! How God answered prayer! Sometimes we only had enough for one more day's work, but God never allowed us to be so short that we had to stop work until more money came in.

We purchased the brick, mortar, etc. and kept enough money for the labor. Often the needed money came in on a daily basis.

Trials of faith occurred in the tightest of times. We never asked anyone but God for money. One day I received a phone call from a lost lady who lived several hundred miles away. She had heard of our situation and offered a loan of \$5,000 (in the mid 1980's). We explained our principles and she said we could have it interest free and pay it back when we were able...or perhaps never! We could not accept without casting doubt on our God. She later sent us a number of gifts, totaling over \$10,000!

After we had started, Mr. Canfield came to me and asked where they would find the steel headers. I asked what headers were and what he needed them for. He kindly explained, saying they were needed the very next day! We quickly figured how many of which sizes, and as best I remember, found we could not have

them in time. Again, we appealed to our God and He led us to talk with a neighbor across the boulevard. Mr. Merbaugh was, at this point, in the demolition business. When asking him for advice, he solved our problem. His present project was the taking down the Hagerstown Brewery. Quickly checking, he GAVE us all the headers we needed and they were all the right size. Isn't our God great?

Later, Mr. Canfield noticed a large expense we would face due to the city's requirements for a fire escape. Taking me to the building inspector he negotiated a change which saved us thousands of dollars. We completed the brick work on time, with all bills paid. This helped our confidence in a personal and powerful God.

CHAPTER 10

THE ROOF

Without great drama, the roof still required much prayer.

First, was the setting of the roof trusses. Ben Eby helped greatly in finding a crew to place them and the LOAN of a crane to lift them. He had the invaluable experience to operate the crane.

Several days before the scheduled date we had consistent rain. Now the back of our land had much rock but the front didn't. We had to set the crane in front and it became too muddy to make a solid base.

Again, we were led to consult our neighbor Mr. Merbaugh. At this time, he was demolishing the old county jail and was happy to dump some of the stone walls in our front yard for the crane. God's timing and direction was perfect.

After the trusses were in place and the plywood sheeting nailed down, we faced getting a roof on in chilly weather.

Ed Tangen in New York who had sawed out our lumber etc. called in answer to prayer. He offered to gather a crew to roof the building on a Saturday. We set up scaffolding and gathered supplies with our men and ladies. When the van load arrived in early morning after a 5-6 hour trip, we were ready with hot coffee and food for their breakfast. Temperatures were above freezing and it was raining. Ed gave the "go

ahead” and work began in less-than-ideal circumstances. We maintained a supply of hot food, coffee, etc. and warmed the tarpaper in the cozy Chapel. Extra dry clothes were rounded up and our men carried coffee, tarpaper and shingles to the roof while the crew worked. As wet clothes were exchanged for dry ones, the wet clothes were dried and cold bodies warmed. It was amazing to see this done in difficult circumstances and the New Yorkers headed home with their own clothes before dark. The roof lasted much longer than the nay-sayers said and to the best of my memory, no one was sick as a result. Isn't our God gracious?

CHAPTER 11

LIGHTING

“I know that Thou canst do every thing,...”

Job 42:2a

We had watched and marveled at the amazing variety of answers to prayer our God supplied. As we were building by faith, God set the pace by His provisions. We prayed ahead regarding future needs and expenses. As we realized the cost of lighting fixtures God did some unusual things to encourage us.

Twenty-five miles south of us there was a V.A. Hospital which the government decided to replace. Two people attending our services were hired as truck drivers to haul the demolished hospital to a land fill. They informed us of any number of items which might be used in our project.

We prayed for them and they went to their boss and were granted permission to take what they wanted for the church! Stopping by the building on their way home we often helped unload their pickup truck of these treasures. Included were perhaps 60 fluorescent lighting fixtures. With cleaning and paint, they did service at minimal cost of tubes and elbow grease. Some lasted over 30 years.

Our auditorium had a balcony on three sides and was ideal for the aforementioned fluorescent lighting. The center area was a matter for prayer. God surprised us with an answer that showed His kindness to give us above and beyond our requests. At this time, a church across

town decided to change their auditorium lighting, offering us perhaps 10 fixtures for the price of one new one! This gave us a great savings on church lights, -- nicer than we would have bought.

Paul Hawbaker did our electrical work and using what we had, gave us excellent results.

CHAPTER 12

“ABUNDANTLY ABOVE”

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,”
Ephesians 3:20

Throughout the building process we maintained our church ministries, especially missions. We saw several church plants start in rural upstate New York. We also worked with the re-opening of Christian Lake Bible Conference. One day I received a

phone call from Don Webb, the founder and director of the Conference and the logger who had helped us earlier. It appeared that God wanted us to add some special beauty to our building – at no cost! We had been building simply and stretching our money. Now our God set about to do for us above our frugal ways.

An old Episcopalian church in New York had closed and was being converted into apartments. It was accepted in the region that they usually had the finest stained glass, and this was no exception.

Don wanted to give the church two pieces which he thought were appropriate for us. On one of my trips to help with the NY “start-ups”, he wanted me to come by and look at them and see if they would be acceptable. He asked me to bring my van for transporting them back along with a beautiful chandelier. He had them checked by craftsmen to get them in top shape.

One piece now adorns our Prayer Room and other the wall behind the pulpit.

The second stained glass carries much meaning as it is a stunning circular piece with an open Bible! The chandelier helps illuminate the pulpit area and they all add an unexpected class to our simple design.

A family attending had bought a house and donated a similar but smaller light which helps light the auditorium stair well.

Our God is so kind to encourage His people without cost!

CHAPTER 13

UTILITIES

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16b

We tried to pray effectually in all aspects of the project. Our God showed His power to work in such a variety of areas.

We needed electricity to provide light and power for a table saw, hand saws, planer and molder etc. to move the building project along, especially at night. Long range we would need full service, but the timing and expense could be faced later.

There was an old double house next to our property. On one side it was occupied by a poor older couple. We proposed an offer that if we could run a line from them to our building, we would pay the whole of their bill and thus help them financially. This saved us money also. We later obtained the property in a way which proved a blessing to them, their family and the church. Our God is so wise.

We prayed about the type of fuel to use for our heating. During this time the gas company called and asked if they could have permission to run a gas line behind our building. We agreed, and now use that line for energy that has been a savings for 35+ years!

Other steps went so much smoother than expected – with prayer. This included a water line, sewer line, air conditioning, etc.

CHAPTER 14

GIFTS

While most of our people gave sacrificially of their finances, they also gave of their possessions. Let us see some cases our God used.

One lady remembered some old dishes in her attic. An antique shop gave an excellent price for them. Some other items did well at yard sales. One couple gave a collection of old bottles they had recovered from dumps over the years. These brought an excellent price as some were of historical value.

One family bought a large roll of carpet which covered both floors on our two-story building. A Georgia church loaned us a mitre saw and a 3 inch power planer. The one saved much time and labor on our trim work. The second helped reduce high places on our 2 by 12 framing timbers. They were rough cut hemlock and oversized. A set of faucets, gold colored and elaborate, also brought an excellent price.

One man had collected silver coins for years. Most came from older wrecked cars at junk yards. (Previous owners had lost their loose change.) When we were contracting a team to properly finish our drywall, it was discovered that the main partner collected silver. He suggested some options for ways to sell them. Then he offered to take them himself at a better price than the market by greatly lowering his bid. This proved to be a great help at a tight time. God's timing of gift and contractor showed the greatness in scheduling all things for HIS glory.

CHAPTER 15

CONCLUSION

All along the way God supplied money, materials, advice and laborers at His speed, not ours. Sometimes faster and sometimes slower, but He was always teaching us of His wisdom and our immaturity.

There were helpers from West Virginia, Pennsylvania as well as Maryland. Others came from New York and New Jersey and Czechoslovakia. They came as we needed, with the skills required. Looking back after 35 years, it is amazing how God organized our workers.

As we moved into the later stages of the building we were facing some great challenges. These included finances to finalize the building itself, storm water management, and parking. How would God solve all these problems?

About that time the city contacted us about a proposed project of constructing Wesel Boulevard through the edge of our property. This would improve our location but they wanted some of our land. What did God have in mind for us now?

We met, talked, prayed and trusted God to act. Consulting with the city we learned they wanted our access entrance (one car wide) to Burhans Boulevard along with room for a turning lane from the front of the Chapel property. They also wanted a sizeable piece of the lawn. They asked what we wanted. After more prayer we responded. Others were asking for large cash payments or land of much greater value. That lady who represented the city had recently been promoted from the

Permit and Inspections Office. She was well acquainted with us and our ways. We discussed our building needs and ended up with storm water problems solved, paved parking lot to their commercial specifications and commercial access to Burhans Boulevard. This included rock removal, grading done, good sidewalks on two sides of the Chapel property, parking lot striping and some cash. The city was happy and we were elated.

The end result of all this was a much improved property, a corner lot on two key boulevards, less grass to mow, future problems solved, and money to move our building project along.

Doesn't this make you, the reader, want to worship such a God?

He showed Himself faithful to His servants from start to finish. He taught us much about Himself, His ways and the effectiveness of believing prayer.

At first it was an impossible road,
then it became difficult, but now it is done.
Bless the Lord!