

Calvary Baptist Church Monticello, IL

Early History
The Little Church That Could

By Robert L. Anderson

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Prologue

This is the story of the joys and struggles of a small band of people who were not afraid or ashamed to trust God to lead them in what seemed an impossible task.

It is recorded here so those who lived it will never forget the miracles God performed and so those who come later can say, "It can happen to us, too."

Jesus Said, "With God all things are possible." Matt. 19:26

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

Let us praise God, And only God for these blessings!

2010 (revised)

IN THE BEGINNING – Chapter 1

Speaking for the church at its twenty-fifth anniversary, Lana Ross wrote, "The Calvary Baptist Church of Monticello, Illinois began as a thought in the mind of God and He placed that thought in the hearts of men." One of those men was Lyle Moreland, who was the first to see both the need and the possibility of having a Southern Baptist Church in this beautiful little city.

The first meeting was held in the home of Lyle and Alice Moreland on August 7, 1958. There were five people in attendance including A. G. Rednour, Director of Missions for the East Central Illinois Baptist Association. The second meeting, held at Otha Roy's home on August 12 saw twelve people present. It was decided to have the next meeting, August 19 at the back of Lyle's barber shop, which was located at 112 Charter St. on the west side of the "square."

Word soon got out into the community that a second Baptist church was being formed. The reaction was not generally favorable. The reasoning went like this: There are already too many churches in this small town; the group is too small; they don't have any money; no influential people in the group. Other said, "We have one Baptist church. Why don't they just go there?" One pastor said, "It looks like an affront to the Baptist Church." With his theology, he had no concept of the autonomy of the local church! The new group was not welcomed with open arms!

The Associational Missionary enlisted the Bement Baptist Church to sponsor the new mission work, with Pastor Wayne Scott giving guidance from time to time. It was agreed that the Bement church would not send people or money to the project, but would accept members on behalf of the Monticello Southern Baptist Mission and fulfill any legal requirements necessary until it was officially organized into a church.

With money provided by the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board), the Mission rented Kratz Hall, a facility that had been used as a dance hall. It was located above the First State Bank. There was a flight of stairs with about thirty-five steps leading up from the ground floor to the rented area where services were held. As time passed, elderly people who joined climbed those stairs with great effort to worship the Lord! Hallelujah!

Though the room was big and ugly, it did have a piano and folding chairs that were fastened together in groups of two and three. There were also small rooms adjacent to it that could be used as Sunday school rooms. Lyle made a pulpit out of plywood and its ruggedness seemed to fit the decor of the rest of the place.

On December 9, 1958, the group, in agreement with the Bement church, called Robert L. Anderson to pastor the Mission. (He had previously been invited to lead the November 9 Sunday evening services.) Bob had

been raised in the Logan Street Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, Illinois and was active in the choir and other activities there as a teenager.

After serving in the Navy during World War II, he attended the University of Illinois in Urbana, where he served as the first president of the Baptist Student Union.

Through the work in the B.S.U., God called Bob and his wife Janell into the ministry. He did not graduate from the university but began immediately to help establish churches in East Central Illinois.

They had established the Carroll Baptist Church in Urbana, and, prior to that, helped start Temple Baptist Church in Champaign. Starting new churches was nothing new to Bob and Janell as they came on the scene with their three daughters Ronell, Karolyn, and Lucinda.

Bob was also an employee of the Illinois Bell Telephone Co. and had just returned home after spending over a year in the Arctic working on a government project for the phone company. While there, he established a Bible study group and had opportunity to work with, and witness to, men from many countries and cultural backgrounds, including the Eskimos and Indians who were indigenous to that area.

It was necessary for Bob to continue working in Champaign for the telephone company. He knew they must move to Monticello because it would be too difficult to pastor a church and live twenty-five or thirty miles away. So, they set out to find a house that they could afford. None could be found.

Finally, the one and only realtor in town told him about a man named Amos Beals who was subdividing his farm and building houses on it. The development was about four miles northeast of town. He hinted that this was a pretty risky venture since Mr. Beals was having difficulty financing the project. Amos himself laughed that even his "old cows" had to be mortgaged. He was a rugged man in his fifties and had a speech impediment many mistook as a sign that he was not very intelligent. Dealing with him, however, revealed that he was soft hearted and smart. After some negotiation a deal was made and the Andersons moved in, in the spring of 1959.

Another thing that had to be dealt with immediately was the relationship with the First Baptist Church. There had been some strong feelings on both sides as to the need of a Southern Baptist church in town. When Pastor Anderson decided to try to build a better relationship between the two, he went to see the pastor of the First Baptist Church.

First, he learned all he could about the church. The most surprising thing was the other pastor's name was also Robert Anderson. The other pastor was shocked one Saturday morning to see a young preacher standing at his door. No time was lost in getting to the heart of the matter. The younger man assured the older gentleman that there was no intent to proselyte the members of his church. As to the need for another church the younger man asked, "Well, Brother Anderson, how many people has your church won to Christ this past year?" (He had been informed they had not won anybody all year.) To which the older gentleman answered, "Well, not many." The young man said, "Brother Anderson, we hope that the two of us can stand side by side and win this whole town to Christ."

After sharing their mutual beliefs in Christ they prayed together and as time went on they came to appreciate each other very much. The older man gave the new comer a book he had written on *The Doctrine of the Church*. Within about a year, First Baptist Church started a building program resulting in many souls being saved.

CLOSE FELLOWSHIP – Chapter 2

Between the time the Andersons were called to the Mission and the time they moved into their new home, they commuted on Sundays from Champaign to Monticello. Following the Sunday morning services, they would go home with one of the families. After a good meal there was a time of really getting to know each other. Then just before they went to the evening service a little snack was eaten. After the service they would return to the home of the host for coffee and another snack before heading back to Champaign.

On one occasion, the Andersons spent the day with the Otha Roy family. When offered the snack prior to the evening service Brother Anderson declined saying that he just couldn't preach on a full stomach. After preaching what the pastor thought was an outstanding sermon they returned to the Roy's home. Brother Roy

said to the pastor in his best Kentucky accent, “Brother Bob you might jest as well to’ve ‘et.” All had a good laugh! This is an example of the close feeling the people had for each other.

On special occasions such as Memorial Day and the Fourth of July the families enjoyed having a picnic at the Piatt County Forest Preserve. Everyone came and ate, played games such as keep away and horseshoes, visited and just had a good time together. This was always a highlight during the spring and summer time.

Another example of the closeness of the fellowship occurred one day when a person who was not affiliated with the group said to one of the members that they were going to visit the pastor at his home (there was no church office). The member told them that the pastor was not at home but was at someone else’s house. The person responded by saying, “My, you people know where each other are all the time.” That was not always true, but often it was.

After the pastor was called, there arose a need for a pianist. Alice Moreland had been playing if she could pick the songs she knew. She encouraged Kathleen Roy, who was thirteen years old, to play. Kathleen admitted she was not very good, but the people appreciated and encouraged her and in a short time she became an outstanding pianist.

Another need was to find a place to baptize people who accepted Christ as their Savior. There were two options. One was to drive about twenty miles to the town of Weldon and use the baptistery at the Weldon Baptist Church. The church people and the candidate drove to the church on Sunday afternoon and had the service. Then they returned to Monticello for the evening service. This was done during the winter months.

The other option was to baptize in the Sangamon River just outside of Monticello. The Hartman family lived on the river and their home served as the place where those involved could change clothes. It was a little dangerous in the springtime because the water was quite high, muddy, and cold. The current was swift.

On one occasion a sixteen-year old girl who was quite tall and large was baptized. It was April. When she went under the cold water she panicked and leaped straight up out of the water. It was all the pastor could do to keep her from going down stream with the rapid current.

GETTING ORGANIZED – Chapter 3

In February of 1959 Lyle Moreland, Bob Anderson and Basil Hartman were appointed as a finance committee. One decision the committee made was to pay Brother Anderson fifteen dollars per week, a figure that never changed in the eight years he served as pastor. Also, a building fund was established looking toward the time when a building could be built. By May of that year, Brothers Bob Anderson and Wayne Scott were named to head a building committee. The work was progressing well and it was not long before Brother Scott excused himself from the committee because he felt he was no longer needed.

From the very beginning, there were four goals in the hearts of the people: (1) To win the lost, (2) To support missions, (3) To organize into an independent church, and (4) To build a building that was well located and would be an asset to the Lord’s work and the community. The feeling was that while the first two were both present and long-range goals, the other two would have to be done in the proper order and as soon as practical.

In the January 1960 business meeting the group voted to organize into a church on May 8th of that same year. Much had to be done!

A constitution committee was elected with Brother Anderson as Chairman. Constitutions from Carroll Baptist Church and Bement Baptist Church were used as guides to hammer out this new document. After a few sessions the committee presented its work to the body for its approval prior to the May 8th meeting.

It was felt that the name of the church should be a Bible name and that it would be best if in an alphabetical listing it appeared near the top. After considering several names Calvary Baptist seemed to meet the requirements. A name that proved appropriate because in time, the church would be located on a small hill at the edge of town. Brother Anderson was duly called as the first pastor. The church voted to associate with the East Central Illinois Baptist Association, the Illinois Baptist State Association, and the Southern Baptist Convention. *The Baptist Faith and Message* was adopted as the statement of faith to be followed and *Kerfoot’s Parliamentary Law* was selected to be the guide in conducting business.

The body also voted to extend the charter an extra six weeks so anyone joining in that time period would be included as charter members.

Though the body had grown in number, they still only had twenty-six members and ten of those were teenagers and children. There were only sixteen adults with seven of those being heads of homes.

The charter members were:

Lyle Moreland	Robert L. Anderson
Alice Moreland	Janell B. Anderson
Gary Kuhn (son of Alice)	Ronell Rae Anderson
Stella Blackburn	Jimmy Moreland
Otha Roy	Duane McCall
Beatrice Roy	Myrtle McCall
Kathleen Roy	Pamela McCall
Doris Roy	Michael McCall
Jack Roy	Donald LeRoy Gelsinger
Carolyn Roy	Dorothy Gelsinger
James LeRoy Gelsinger	Darrell Gelsinger
Gladys Gelsinger	Doloris Anne Gelsinger
Thelma Schaal	Richard Gelsinger

The following people joined the Church during the “open charter membership period:”

Gorrell, Virgil	Gorrell, Eunice
Hildabrand, Clifton	Hildabrand, Beatrice
Hildabrand, Irma	Hildabrand, Linda
Hildabrand, Patricia	Hildabrand, Curtis
Tribe, Betty	

Virgil and Eunice Gorell were charter members. Prior to their move from Urbana they took roomers into their home. One of their tenants was a young lady named Rosemary Spessard who was in nurse’s training. As a result of the Gorrell’s influence Rosemary was saved and committed her life to go to Bangkok, Thailand where she was in charge of the nursing staff in a new Baptist Hospital.

Jim and Gladys Gelsinger were related to the Hartmans and joined before the church was organized. Gladys was in poor health. Sometimes she just could not make the trip from their home in Decatur to Monticello and climb those stairs to the second floor of the First State Bank building. She always said she could do nothing for the Lord. She actually did many things. Her most memorable accomplishment was making two communion cloths. With delicate nettle point she made a cross of white satin thread in the center of the top cloth and put borders around the edges of both cloths. They were beautiful!

Two other wonderful families soon joined the church. They were the Bakers and the Cowleys.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN – Chapter 4

There were two brothers that headed up the Gelsinger clan. Jim, the older (mentioned previously), was a railroad conductor. He and his wife Gladys were Christians with strong morals and good judgment.

Roy, however, was not a Christian and had little in common with his brother. His wife Dorothy and their two sons Daryl and Tim were members of the church and made the trip from Decatur on most Sunday mornings.

During the fall revival in 1960 Roy’s wife, Dorothy, and the two boys came to the service one night. She told the members, who had been praying for her husband, that Roy had gone coon hunting that night.

While the evangelist preached, God laid it on the pastor’s heart very definitely that he was to go see Roy that night. When the invitation was given, the pastor told the people that he needed a man to go with him on a special mission after the service. Brother Otha Roy came to the pastor and said he would go and asked what it was. Before the people left the building brother Otha came to the pastor again and said, “Do you know what coon huntin’ is?” The pastor assured him that he knew that coon hunting was an all night thing and there was usually drinking and other stuff that went along with it. Sister Dorothy was informed of the plans and she too was skeptical.

When the two men arrived at the home in Decatur, Mrs. Gelsinger had just finished making a pot of coffee and was pouring it, expecting to have a long night. The three of them sat at the table for about five

minutes when they heard a terrible racket as Roy came roaring in the drive. When he banged the back door it was obvious he was in a foul mood. The last people he wanted to see that night was the preacher and the deacon.

When he sat down for a cup of coffee the two men began to tactfully inquire about his evening. He told them in a loud angry voice, "Everything went wrong. The dogs were supposed to find coons and "tree" them. But instead they chased rabbits all night long! The whole night was ruined."

To make matters worse, when he finally got the dogs under control he put them in the trunk of the car, slammed the lid down and discovered he had locked the car keys in the trunk! He had to tear the back seat out of the car to get to his keys. It's no wonder the last people he wanted to see that night were two men from the church.

Brother Otha began to explain that it was God who had caused the dogs to chase rabbits and the keys to get locked in the car, and it was God's way of getting him to come home so He could speak to him through His messengers. The two men tried for about three hours to get Roy to accept Christ and, even though he had calmed down and realized that God was dealing with him, he refused to trust the Lord.

As the two men left the house, they rejoiced because of the way God was dealing with Roy and were certain that he would soon become a true believer in Jesus. But it did not happen. And God never again laid it on the heart of that pastor with such a compelling command to see him again. He did go see him, but it was at the request of the oldest son, not at the request of the Lord. It is sad to report that as far as the church ever knew he never was saved. But "The Hound of Heaven" surely was on his trail.

Why then report this in a history of the church? Because it is an example of how God was leading the flock in those days.

THE ON-GOING BATTLE – Chapter 5

Almost from the beginning there was a constant conflict with the Jehovah's Witnesses. They did not have a group in Monticello. So, two or three times a week, four or five ladies and their children would drive from Clinton, Illinois and visit women whom they thought were prospects for their beliefs. For a while they were making good progress. They would visit the women during the day when the men were not home. The women told their husbands about the visit. The next time the men went to Lyle for a haircut they asked him about the Jehovah's Witnesses. Lyle informed the pastor who started visiting some of those homes.

One of the men was Ervin Cowley. He was very upset about these people visiting Opal every Tuesday when he was not home. Lyle shared this information with the pastor who started visiting Opal every Tuesday night.

This went on for several weeks. Then Opal told the pastor that her doctor said that because she had had several children without proper medical care she needed to have surgery. Of course, when she mentioned this to the Jehovah's Witnesses, they had a fit and told her that God did not want her to be operated on. But when she asked Brother Bob about it he explained to her that the doctor's knowledge came from God and that He gives it to men so He can work through them to help people. He also told her that there was no Biblical reason not to have surgery. In fact, without it she might not live to see her youngest children grow up.

That Tuesday night she did not decide what to do. But a few days later she was admitted to a hospital in Decatur for surgery. When the pastor went to see her she said, "Do you want to know what made me decide?" "Yes, of course!" "It wasn't anything you said exactly. I was so confused I went to bed praying for God to show me what to do. In my dream that night your face appeared to me. I knew then what to do." Now that scared the daylights out of the preacher boy.

One Saturday the pastor was visiting in a home not far from his. When he was about to leave, a car pulled into the drive and the people in the house said it was "the Jehovah's Witness ladies from Clinton." For the pastor to leave would have made it seem that he was afraid to face these people and concede that they were right. But, to stay would probably turn the living room into a battleground. He chose to stay, and, sure enough, it was a battleground.

He had learned somewhere that if one is standing and others seated in a situation like this it shows that he has the authority. As things turned out the Jehovah's Witnesses were put on the defensive.

It was not long after that when the news came to the barber shop that the leader of the Jehovah's Witness group said, "It looks like we are going to lose all our people to the Baptists."

THE PROMISED LAND – Chapter 6

In October of 1960, a three quarter acre piece of property on Bridge Road at the west edge of town became available by auction through the county court. The church decided that this was the place that the Lord meant for the church to be built provided additional land could be acquired adjacent to it.

The building committee consisting of Duane McCall, chairman; Lyle Moreland, treasurer; Clifton Hildabrand, construction worker; Herman Baker, construction worker; Otha Roy, deacon; and Bob Anderson, pastor, met to decide how much the church should bid on this property. The problem was no one knew who would bid or how much those people were willing to invest. After much discussion, it was decided that Lyle Moreland would represent the church at the auction with the authority to bid about twenty-five hundred dollars. After the meeting the pastor told Lyle to go as high as three thousand if need be saying, "We'll find the extra money someplace."

News spread fast that the church was going to bid on the property. Since it was such an eyesore to the community, it was not likely that many people would be interested in it. The place had been a hog lot with a one-room shack on it. The old man that lived there had all kinds of drunken wild parties. A neighbor lady said, "You wouldn't believe what all went on in that place."

When the auction came two other men wanted it, but one gentleman said he would not bid against the church. When the bidding took place, the other man bid two thousand one hundred dollars and Lyle bid twenty two hundred and the other man dropped out. Praise God!

There was a good feeling not only in the church but also in the community that the church got the bid. This was a little surprising when one considers the attitude that people had when the mission first started. It seems that they thought that even a Baptist church was better than a hog lot at the entrance into the city.

The next step was to acquire additional land for future expansion. The land behind the property did not seem to be the best choice because the church property was on the south slope of the hill and the other was on the north. There was a house on the east side. That left only the property on the west, which was not very promising either. There were two gullies big enough to put a normal sized house in each one. Both contained a lot of trash and trees. It was going to take another miracle from God to get this land and make it useable.

Beyond the gullies was a stretch of bottomland that reached all the way to the Sangamon River. All this land, including the gullies belonged to a young farmer named John Stoddard. The committee decided to have the pastor ask Mr. Stoddard if he would consider selling two acres of that property to the church and how much would it cost?

The Stoddards had a daughter in the same classroom as the pastor's oldest daughter in school. Mrs. Stoddard was the director of the Girls 4-H Club and the pastor's two oldest daughters were active members. So the Andersons and the Stoddards knew each other. This helped! Since Brother Bob and Mr. Stoddard were both busy men, it was very difficult to find a time when the pastor could go to their home. Finally, the date was set and the meeting took place. At first there was considerable "small talk" then the conversation became more serious.

The need for the extra land was presented to them and they wanted to know all about Southern Baptists. Baptist beliefs were shared with them and literature was given to them. After about forty-five minutes Mr. Stoddard revealed that they were Methodists and that they believed in tithing. He also said that he and his wife would talk about our request. If they were interested he would let us know and he would meet with the building committee. The church prayed hard!

In a few days the call came and a meeting time was set. That was good news but now the inexperienced committee had to decide on how much to offer them.

When the meeting took place, the committee was in complete disarray. No one knew what to say. Everyone knew they only had a few hundred dollars in the bank. After several minutes, Mr. Stoddard asked how much they paid for the three quarters of an acre tract they had. They told him twenty-two hundred dollars. He said, "Well, that land of mine is not worth near that much." A sigh of relief shot through the group.

It was decided to have each man write his estimate of the value of the land on a piece of paper then take the average and offer that amount. The average figure was five hundred dollars. Mr. Stoddard said, "I'll tell you what, you give me five hundred and I'll give you six hundred back." Guess what, the committee accepted the deal! They also realized that God had performed another miracle!

MOVING ON – Chapter 7

With the land in hand it was time to move on. Things were happening fast, at least faster than they had for almost four years. There was much to do. The old shack had to be disposed of and the land had to be leveled, including filling the two huge gullies on the property acquired from the Stoddards. The law in Illinois required the services of an architect. Because there were so few men in the church everyone thought it best to hire a contractor. Then of course last but not least there was the problem of finance.

As it turned out the easiest problem was the disposing of the old shack. During the time the committee was working on the other things, the shack burned to the ground. No one really knew what happened but then no one cared. All that had to be done was push the ashes into one of those gullies.

The committee began to work on financing. They were certain that no bank or savings and loan would even consider loaning the money with the income level of the members. So the church investigated the possibility of using the Broadway Bond Program that many churches in Illinois were using at that time. The bonds were bearer bonds that bore six percent interest.

It was calculated that eighteen thousand dollars was needed to erect a small sanctuary, but the people at Broadway Bond said with the income of the members they only qualified for a twelve thousand dollar bond issue. The church then enlisted the help of A. G. Rednour, the East Central Illinois Baptist Associational Missionary and Dr. Noel Taylor the Executive Secretary of the Illinois Baptist State Association. Most of the bonds sold in Illinois were through Dr. Taylor's office.

In the application it was pointed out that Monticello was a unique town, very strategically located half way between Champaign and Decatur and that the church people were committed to the Lord. Also, almost all were tithers. Brother Rednour confirmed to Dr. Taylor that the information was correct. In a few days the church learned that the application for eighteen thousand dollars was approved. The First State Bank in Monticello would act as the dispersing agent for the bonds. That meant they would pay out the interest to the bondholders as it became due.

In another act of God a Jewish man, who owned the Vio-Bin Corporation in town, was in the bank at the same time Lyle was there to finalize the arrangement with the bank. Overhearing the arrangement, the Jewish man told the banker, "I want to pay the first year's interest on those bonds." What a surprise!

Now an architect and a contractor had to be secured. Pastor Bob had grown up in Logan Street Baptist Church with Noel Davis who was a licensed architect. Noel had a special interest in designing Baptist church buildings. When Brother Davis was contacted he said he could design the church and since he had another job with a church in Northern Illinois he could stop by Monticello on his trips to the other church. That would reduce his fee. He also said that he would take half of his fee in Broadway Bonds.

He took some time to locate the building on the property and draw the plans. When he did, he placed the building on the east side of the lot. That put it just north of a nice sized tree that Jim Gelsinger said was a hackberry tree. When the building was complete the tree was directly in front of the front door and about thirty feet away from the building. It was noted then that the pastor and others said, "When the church grows that tree will have to be removed."

GROUND BREAKING – Chapter 8

It was a cold, muddy Sunday afternoon in April of 1962 when the church broke ground for the building. Those who turned a spade of dirt were A. G. Rednour, Associational Missionary, Dr. Gilbert Waud, Director of the B.S.U. at the University of Illinois, Deacon Otha Roy, Pastor Bob Anderson and Treasurer Lyle Moreland. (There may have been others as well.)

A LESSON OF ORGANIZATION – Chapter 9

A family with five growing children consumes a lot of milk. The Andersons were no exception. Because they lived in the country, it was easier to have the Country Charm Dairy deliver the milk to the house.

During the summer of 1962 the church was in the midst of constructing the new church building. And the telephone company sent Brother Bob to Woodstock, Illinois to work on a tremendous telephone network that centered in an area west of Chicago and about forty miles east of Rockford where Janell's parents lived.

The Fourth of July came on Wednesday that year. The Andersons decided to have Janell and the children drive to Rockford the Saturday before the Fourth and Bob, who was furnished a company car, would simply drive from Woodstock to Rockford so they could be together for the Holiday.

The church, however, felt since Wednesday was the monthly business meeting the pastor should come back home because of decisions that had to be made concerning the building. So, Janell and the kids went to Rockford as planned and Brother Bob drove the company car back to Monticello.

The regular delivery schedule for the milkman was Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday. One delivery of milk was: three gallons of white milk, one quart of chocolate and one half pint of half and half. Bob knew Janell had left a note in the milk box telling the milkman not to deliver milk until further notice. She also asked the neighbor lady to bring in the mail.

Something happened to the note to the milkman. It probably blew away. So when the neighbor brought the mail in on Saturday she notice the milk that was delivered earlier that day and brought it into the house and put it in the refrigerator.

The next day for milk was Tuesday and the milkman, seeing the delivery box empty, made another delivery of milk. The neighbor lady again brought it in and put it with the previous batch.

Wednesday came and, being a holiday, Bob did not work but took his time driving from Woodstock to Monticello. On the way, he reasoned that there would be no milk at home so he decided to stop at the Country Charm Dairy in town and pick up some. As a matter of fact, he knew Janell was coming home the next day and would need some, so he got the usual delivery amount. What a shock when he got home and found the refrigerator half full of milk.

He realized he would need to call Janell in Rockford and tell her what happened because he knew she would buy milk on the way home. But if he waited until he got back to Woodstock he could call on the company phone and it would not cost him anything. So the next morning he got up early and drove back to Woodstock and called Janell at her sister's house where he knew she would be staying. Her sister said she had just pulled out of the drive. There was no way to contact her. (There were no cell phones in those days.)

As anticipated, she bought another order of milk. Meanwhile it was Thursday and the milkman came again and the neighbor lady put the milk in the refrigerator. The Andersons wound up with fourteen and a half gallons of white milk, five quarts of chocolate and three pints of half and half.

Sunday morning the pastor related this scenario to the church and invited everyone to his house after the evening service for homemade ice cream. They all came and some took milk home with them. Not one drop of that milk spoiled!

There is a valuable lesson to be learned from all of this and it is that everyone involved did what they knew was right, but because it was not coordinated it was a disaster. And that is the way it is in a building program or any activity of a church. On some occasions everyone does what he or she knows is right, but because it is not organized with other actions, it fails. When Janell got home and saw the milk, she organized things in a hurry.

ON WITH THE BUILDING – Chapter 10

The architect designed the roof to be built of knotty pine boards that were six inches thick with the lower surface serving as the ceiling. This decking, ceiling combination decreased the cost, and, because of the thickness, it served as good insulation. This was supported by laminated beams and held in place by twelve-inch spike nails driven down through the roof into the beams with sledge hammers. The underside of the decking and the beams were sanded and varnished by church members. It was beautiful. Since the church sat

on a hill, people passing by on the highway could look in through the glass entryway that went all the way from the floor to the roof and see the beams and ceiling. With the lights on at night it was really inviting.

The contractor was not hard to find either since both Brother Hildabrand and Brother Baker worked for one named Merv Osmond. An agreement was made with him and the date of June 14, 1962 was the date set for construction to begin and January 1963 was set for occupancy.

Nothing however could be done until we had the extra dirt and the location on the property was graded down so the contractor could start.

While the church was busy with all their plans, the city was also busy with theirs. They had decided to widen all the railroad underpasses and some of the streets in town. To do this, they hired a contracting firm from St. Louis, Missouri.

One day Otha Roy noticed huge dump trucks full of dirt and concrete going some place. He was told the contractor was paying one dollar a load to use the city dump. He went immediately to the construction office and asked the manager about the dirt. He assured him the information was correct.

Brother Otha told him about the new church's need for a lot of dirt and it wouldn't cost a cent to dump it. The gentleman asked what kind of church it was. When brother Otha told him it was a Southern Baptist Church, the man exclaimed, "Why, I'm a Southern Baptist. I'll tell you what, you're not quite ready to build, so if you will let us dump the dirt up on that higher ground, I'll put a bulldozer up there and push all the dirt into those two gullies. Then we'll grade the whole lot off real nice, and level off the spot where the building will be so the contractor can start building." Then he added, "It will save us money and it will make you big money." It took about twenty-five hundred loads of dirt and hours of bulldozing to do the job. And it was every bit free! What a miracle! God provides!

STORM CLOUDS AROSE – Chapter 11

It seems there has never been a church built that Satan did not try to cause trouble. This church was no exception.

Long before the building went up He reared His ugly head. At one point a secret meeting was held when the pastor was on vacation. The purpose was to decide whether or not to ask him to resign.

Otha Roy, who was a soft spoken but blunt man, stood up to the group and told them he had a pastor and did not want another one. He explained that what they were doing was wrong. When the pastor heard about it, he realized that his job was not done and to resign would only lend credence to all the negative things that had been said in the community when the Mission first started. Noting more happened, thank God!

Years later the Southern Baptist Convention was in turmoil and Dr. Charles Stanley said, "You have to stay steady in the storm!" What good advice for any pastor!

Brother McCall was the Chairman of the building committee, but before the building was finished he accepted a position as High School Principal in Argenta, Illinois. He and his family moved there and they subsequently resigned all their offices. This was a real blow to the church.

The church decided against laying a Corner Stone because of cost. To solve the problem one day while the men were working on the building, Brother Hildabrand said to Brother Baker, "There needs to be something to tell when this church was built." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a bright new 1962 penny and embedded it in the fresh mortar near the south east corner of the building.

Probably the biggest ruckus happened when the women learned that the men's rest room and women's rest room were side by side. There was to be a single concrete block wall between them with entrances being next to each other. One lady especially was adamant that it had to be changed! There was no negotiation possible!

The matter was taken up with the architect who said all that could be done was to put a sound proof wall between the two rooms and construct two small coat rooms at the entrances. To do this would eliminate a small storage area that was originally planned. To do anything else at that point would have been cost prohibitive.

It was at this stage of construction that the pastor received a great blessing. The walls were up and the roof was on, but the windows were not in. The concrete floor was not poured, the front door framing was in but the glass was not. And there was bickering among the members.

After making a few visits one evening and feeling very discouraged, the pastor decided to stop

by the building site just to see how things were going. The electricity was not installed in the building as yet so he parked his car in front with the headlights shining in through the open entryway. He got out of the car and walked into the building, ducking his head to keep from hitting a two by ten plank the workers had left leaning against the crossbar at the top of the door. He looked around and when he saw the spot where the front pew would be (sometimes called the altar area) there was something that made him freeze in his tracks. It was the shadow of a cross that was created by the headlights, the two by ten board and the cross bar of the doorframe. He dropped to his knees in the dirt and had a good talk with the Lord. He left the place rejoicing. As other problems arose he would remember that cross.

When the building was nearly completed, all those on the building committee said the entryway with glass going all the way to the ceiling was not in the blueprints they had approved. They were convinced the architect was putting things in they had not approved. And he was adding what he wanted. They said, "I've never seen a church with glass going all the way up like that." And how come there was not a regular ceiling like everyone else had?

When the building was complete, the pastor decided to ask Brother McCall to come and preach the first sermon. This was a little unusual but Brother McCall had guided the committee through many decisions. As it turned out it was a very good thing because the first thing he said when he stepped into the building was, "It's just like I thought it would be, just like the drawings." No more was said about the architectural drawings. The pastor told his wife, "I felt like kissing him!"

DONATIONS – Chapter 12

As the work neared its final stages, donations came in. The contractor and his wife (who called themselves missionaries to the Methodists) donated yellow glass for the windows to replace the plain clear glass called for in the contract. Another lady from the Methodist Church gave enough money for the carpeting on the rostrum.

Fred Doty, the local blacksmith in town, lived next door to the pastor. Actually, most of his work was welding, but at that time he was known as a blacksmith.

A terrible tragedy struck the Dotys one Memorial Day weekend when Scottie their three year old son was involved in a fatal accident. The pastor was the first on the scene and ministered to them. As a result the Dotys and the Andersons became quite close. When the project of building a baptistery came along, Fred built it at no charge and even supplied the steel to do the job. It was so heavy that the construction workers almost did not get the thing installed!

After the building was finished Eddie Allen's mother donated seven hundred dollars for a new piano. She was too ill to attend church but she said she was a Baptist and wanted to help the little church. The church was truly blessed!

THE DEDICATION – Chapter 13

Finally the day came in 1963 to dedicate the building. It was a bright sunshiny Sunday afternoon. The small building was packed. The main speaker was one of the men from the state associational office. He brought a message on stewardship entitled "Shearing the Sheep." It was a good message; but if the people in the church had not tithed this building would not exist.

One great surprise was the presence of the local Catholic Priest. He was new in town and the Catholic Church had just acquired some property on the north edge of town and planned to move to that location. Perhaps he was there to see how Baptists did things. It is certain he did not expect a sermon on stewardship.

PERSONAL DEDICATION – Chapter 14

About 1964 the church decided to participate with others in the association to sponsor a World Missions Conference. Calvary was selected to be the host to a foreign missionary who had been stationed in Africa. On his arrival, he tacked a twelve-foot python snakeskin to one of the laminated beams. It hung all the way to the floor.

An article had been submitted to the local weekly newspaper. It said, "Archy Dunaway, missionary to the dark continent of Africa will be speaking at Calvary Baptist Church." But the typesetter at the paper must

have been confused or was playing a joke, because what the public read was, “The dark Archy Dunaway, missionary to the continent of Africa will be speaking at Calvary Baptist Church.”

When the service started the pastor read the article. Then handed it to Archy who could not believe it. A few years later we read in a mission magazine that Archy had been shot and killed as he traveled from one mission station to another by African insurgents.

Here was a man that literally gave his life in the service of God. A man we had met, spoken to, prayed with and laughed with. Now he was dead because he did things for Christ. It makes one realize how little we do for the Lord.

ADDITIONS AND SUBTRACTIONS – Chapter 15

Members were lost and gained. The Hartman family dropped out of church before the church building was started. About the time the building was finished the Gelsingers from Decatur quit coming because of distance and health.

However, God is in the replacement business. One Sunday Eddie and Alma Allen and their three children Fred, Kenny, and Brenda came to church.

A visit to their home revealed that they were members of the First Christian Church in town. Eddie had been raised a Baptist but Alma was baptized into the Christian Church. It was explained to Alma that she would need to be baptized in order to become a member of Calvary Baptist since Baptists did not accept baptisms performed by other churches.

After the visit it seemed certain they would come and join the church and all that would have to be done was baptize Alma and accept Ed on his statement that he was saved and had been baptized into a Baptist church. To the shock of the pastor when he asked them why they came at the invitation, Alma said, “I’m lost and I want to be saved!” She was saved that morning! Eddie and Alma joined and their children soon followed them. They were wonderful additions to the church.

Charles Dalton and Virginia moved their membership from the Deland Baptist Church and were the first couple to be married in the new building. Before they joined the whole Dalton family had decided to join. Leston had thought long and hard on the matter. As it turned out Charles and Virginia’s son and his wife were the last to be married in that sanctuary before God destroyed it. Charles started leading the singing shortly after they joined and continues to do so. What a marvelous blessing to Calvary Baptist the whole Dalton family has been.

SWEET SORROW – Chapter 16

Shakespeare wrote, “Parting is such sweet sorrow.” In May of 1966, after spending almost eight years with the work in Monticello, Brother Bob felt the need to go to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Of course there was sadness at leaving.

Soon after the decision was made, Eleanor Doty, not knowing about the coming move went to the Andersons and told Janell that they were going to leave the Methodist Church and start attending Calvary Baptist. Janell felt it only right to tell her about the plans to move to Texas. The Dotys never made the change.

Another family that was being worked with was the “Buck” Buchanan family. “Buck” was a young Buick dealer in Monticello. When salvation and the Holy Spirit were explained to them they said they had never heard about those things. After Brother Bob’s family moved to Texas, the Buchanans were saved but joined another denomination.

The first Christmas in Fort Worth, each Anderson child was told there would be no gifts that year. The reason? There was no money. Lo and behold! Guess what happened! The Buchanans sent them one hundred dollars through the church in appreciation for telling them about Christ. It was a Christmas the Andersons will never forget!

EPILOGUE

As time passed the church added two more buildings to the rear of the first unit. The loan officer at the First State Bank said to the men who came in for a loan, “What’s going on out there on that hill?” They told him and he said, “I wish something like that would happen at our church!”

Around the year 2000 the church began to feel the need to expand the sanctuary. But, as they looked at their situation, they felt they were land locked. But some of the brethren said, “God doesn’t think we are land locked.”

The only way they could see to go was to buy the house on the east side of the church. They figured it would take seventy thousand dollars just for the land. It would then have to be torn down in order to build a new sanctuary. The original building would also have to be raised and the hackberry tree in front would have to be removed. That tree over the years had become a “holy cow” to some of the members.

Some suggested that the church be moved. But that would be extremely expensive and it meant losing the best location in town. What to do? What to do?

As “The Lord answered Job out of a whirlwind” (Job 38:1), He also answered the church’s question! According to the late Cliff Hildabrand, God sent two tornados October 24, 2001 that met right at the church and destroyed the original sanctuary and the hackberry tree. It carried the roof, that was exceptionally well built, away, dodging over and under power lines to the east and set it down on a nearby apartment building. The church now had to rebuild the sanctuary at that location. (The rest of the building was still intact.)

Young people volunteered to come from Alabama to help clean up the mess. Bricklayers came from North Carolina to lay bricks in record time. They too were volunteers. A mission church in Connecticut donated \$25,000 from their building fund to help rebuild the church because God told them to!

Donations came from members of other churches in Monticello. Significant donations came from 2 families in other parts of Illinois who heard about the destruction of the church and they “wanted to help.”

The storm also struck a blue spruce tree the Andersons had planted in their yard about five miles away from the church. It had been the next to the last Christmas tree they had at that house. Every time they came back to Monticello they checked on that blue spruce tree. It reminded them of many good times and great blessings. The storm took the top out of that tree but it survived. One may ask, “Of all the trees in the area why was that tree hit.” It seemed that God was leaving His signature in case anyone doubted His intent.

When Amos Beals built that house he put oak cyclone bracing in the corners of the frame. No doubt that saved the house from damage. Amos was smarter than most people thought.

Oh yes, what happened to the 1962 penny that Cliff Hildabrand put in the mortar of the first building? It was lost in the rubble after the tornado. When the new sanctuary was being built, the church again could not afford a corner stone. So they placed a penny in the mortar on each side of the entrance, a 1962 on one side and a 2004 on the other side.

The new building was dedicated in October 2004. The service was supposed to last about an hour and a half. It lasted three hours and it was so spiritually uplifting that no one got tired or restless. What a day! What a day! The miracles involved in this rebuilding were just as great as the ones involved in the original building. Frustrations were just as depressing and work was just as hard.

The old timers and the newcomers
join each other in saying:

“Let all men take notice!

This church and this building are being built
by a miracle working God!”

AMEN!

&

AMEN!