

Story of the Chapel - Rev. Jack Murray, 1949

Readers of the *Christian Beacon* have been following with keen interest the progress in the construction of the new conference chapel at Harvey Cedars. The providence and leading of the Lord has been so evident that we knew our readers would appreciate more of the details. We trust that this account will strengthen the faith of many who wait on God for answers to prayer.

Back in 1945, the board of directors at the Harvey Cedars Bible Presbyterian Conference set forth an extensive expansion program. The Conference owned at that time a splendid resort hotel capable of accommodating 250 persons. As attendance increased it became very obvious that the following projects would be required:

1. The construction of a dining room which would seat 400 persons. This structure was to be equipped with the best kitchen equipment available.
2. The construction of a chapel which would seat 600 persons.
3. The construction of three large dormitories which would each accommodate seventy-two persons.
4. The remodeling of the entire first floor of the Conference hotel and the conversion of as many rooms as possible to rooms with private bath.
5. The improvement of the grounds which includes the reclamation of all property by dredge fill; the construction of bulkheads and complete landscaping.

In 1946 and 1947 the first part of this expansion program became reality. A magnificent dining room was constructed and many other improvements were realized to the extent of \$60,000.

Early in 1948 a campaign of prayer and giving known as the "January to June" campaign was launched to secure funds for the erection of the new chapel. A most remarkable incident took place as the Lord's seal of approval that this project should be started. The board of directors had decided that a general contractor would not be engaged, but rather a plan of sub-contracting under the guidance of the Conference director was to be followed, who felt that the first step was to secure the services of a competent architect to draw up the plans. Knowing of the splendid work of Clarence MacNelly of Collingswood, I felt that I should contact him. Mr. MacNelly, some of you will remember, is the gentleman responsible for drawing up plans for the Bible Presbyterian Tabernacle in Collingswood on such short notice when over 1,000 persons left the Collingswood Presbyterian Church in obedience to Christ. In only three weeks after leaving the old church the present tabernacle was ready for occupancy. Surely the Lord had Mr. MacNelly ready. I asked another board member if he thought Mr. MacNelly would consider drawing up plans for our new chapel. His response was to the effect that, because of the very busy schedule of Mr. MacNelly, it was very doubtful.

Nevertheless, I called Mr. MacNelly on the phone and found an enthusiastic architect, more than willing to talk things over, and to my amazement gave me an appointment for four o'clock that afternoon! When I arrived in his office, I was graciously received. I set before Mr. MacNelly in a general way the structure we had in mind and with that left it entirely in his hands.

It was not very long before he called me to consult with him on a few rough sketches he had drawn up. During that interview, he told me that as a service to the Lord and to the Bible Presbyterian movement he would render no statement for his services. Needless to say, I was filled with thanksgiving at this evident token that the Lord was leading. How I thank God for men like this Christian layman who made the drawings for our chapel. But that was not all! The services of an engineer were required, and Mr. MacNelly put us in touch with Mr. Horace Nichol森 of Philadelphia, a first-class engineer who has done our work for us down to meticulous detail and has been more than willing to advise on every point.

Many times the opening circumstance in any project is of vital significance and so it was in this case. The willingness of Mr. MacNelly to draw the plans in the first place, his excellent services rendered without charge, and his recommendation of Mr. Nicholson was the opening token of the will of the Lord. With renewed faith we underlined “build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God,” our original verse of promise, and continued to make plans for the chapel.

After several consultations with Mr. MacNelly and Mr. Nicholson, the plans were completed and the blueprints made. In the meantime, funds were being secured for this new structure. At the end of our “January to June” campaign in 1948 we had received \$2,622.65 for that purpose. This, of course, represented only about one tenth of that which was needed to construct the building, but we were on certain ground, and we continued to pray for this need. The conviction that gripped the hearts of the members of the board had been deepened—we must have a chapel which would adequately care for the crowds at Harvey Cedars. We were determined not to go into debt for this project. Funds would have to be in hand before construction would be started.

Part II

In the last installment of *The Story of the Chapel* I informed you of the unusual leading of the Lord in the work of our architect, Mr. Clarence MacNelly, and our engineer, Mr. Horace Nichol森. We continue, this week, in the chain of events in which the Lord led us to build the chapel.

After the plans were completed, we had several sets of blueprints prepared and gave them to various subcontractors for their bids. Very soon these bids were received, and we were somewhat amazed to find that, on the basis of these bids, we could expect to pay approximately \$40,000 for the structure which had been drawn up. This, of course, was far more than we had anticipated, and it seemed that on a “pay as we go” policy it would be a long time before we would have our chapel. In the “January to June” campaign of 1948 we had received a total of \$2,622.65 for this building which seemed very little compared to the \$40,000 needed. We continued to pray earnestly for the leading of the Lord throughout 1948. The only expenditures during that year were:

- Survey and Clearing: \$158.82
- Permit to dredge: \$102.70

- Blueprints: \$4.24
- Engineering fees: \$370.00
- Total: \$635.76

When we opened the “January to June” campaign for this year, 1949, we did not know that the Lord was going to reveal His will for the beginning of the construction very shortly. All of this time I had been studying the blueprints and asking many questions concerning construction and had found that by careful planning we could put up our chapel for \$25,000 instead of \$40,000! With this information in my possession, I was eager to get enough to start our building. It was at this time that I was assisting the Rev. Harvey Springer in a series of evangelistic meetings in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood. Mr. McIntire, the pastor of this church and a member of the board of directors of the conference, came down from the platform with me each night as the song service was completed, and we usually sat together at the front of the church. One night during this series, Mr. McIntire and I had just taken our seats in the front row when he passed me a note which said “You will receive \$5000 this week as a gift for your chapel fund.” You may be assured I really enjoyed the meeting that night! A party had contacted him and told him this wonderful news. I could hardly wait to get to Harvey Cedars in order to get started. The party who gave this gift was used of God in making it clear to us that we should start construction. Most of the time the gift means more than just the amount. In this case it was the token from the Lord that we should start our structure. Consequently on February 22 we broke ground and started the construction work. That which had been the object of much prayer and waiting on God was actually under way. On March 1, 1949, we had \$7,924.19 in the chapel fund.

Many do not realize that building at the shore is very different from building in other places. Before we can build *up*, we must build *down* to be assured of a solid foundation. First of all, 88 12-foot pilings had to be placed before any cement footings or foundation could be erected, and even then the top of these pilings were still six feet below the floor level! After the pilings had been driven, it was time to erect the wooden forms for the steel reinforced concrete foundation. Before me I had a contract and bid and it read: “To supply all labor and materials for foundation forms—\$3,035.” I could not see how it should cost so much so I turned to an old reliable carpenter of my acquaintance, Mr. Isaac Ford of Collingswood, and asked him if he would come down to Harvey Cedars and build my forms. Then I turned to a hard-working colored laborer and brought him on the job, too. With plans in hand I showed Mr. Ford just what I wanted and then turned and dug the first trench to show the laborer just what should be done. The lumber I secured through a lumber dealer who was a friend of one of our board members, Dr. Ralph S. Wright of Haddonfield. It was not long until the forms were completed, and when I added up the cost of lumber and labor I found that the \$3,035 job had been completed for \$414! The Lord was good in not only supplying our need but in helping us to spend the money in the most economical way.

Next, the reinforcing steel had to be placed in the forms before the concrete could be poured. That, too, is a story of economy. The steel price was \$1,150. The actual price of the steel

was \$750 and the additional amount was for fabrication. Again, after studying the plans, I could not see why it should cost \$400 to fabricate the steel on the job. I asked if they would deliver the steel and allow us to fabricate it. This they did. After it was delivered, I fabricated a number of pieces myself, and I knew then that we could do it. However, when the time came to fabricate the steel along with the contractor who was pouring the concrete, I could not be there because of a heavy preaching and teaching schedule. It was then that the Lord intervened again. Two days before, I heard of a Christian man who had been laid off at the New York Shipyard in Camden, and he was a steel worker. I contacted him and showed him my blueprints. The next day he went to Harvey Cedars and fabricated the steel for exactly \$55! That meant that the chapel fund had been saved \$345 more! Each step of the way I was convinced of the leading of the Lord. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me."