



'Nothing less than a miracle'

Gilbertown Assembly of God set to begin construction of new facility

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — "We're building to meet our needs, and to plan for future growth."

Rev. Doug Chapman calls it 'nothing less than a miracle'. From the steady and constant growth of his church to the unexpected availability of land, he says that God has given them an open door, and he plans to walk through it.

When Chapman first took the pastorate at Gilbertown Assembly of God eight years ago, he came back to the place of his ancestors, the church where his great-grandparents were among the first members.

It was the church where his parents first met, the place where his uncle Paul Deaton had once pastored, and the place where he was dedicated to God as a child.

But it was also a place where membership had dwindled and growth was rare.

"When I came here, we had just a few people," he says, "mostly older people who had been there a long time."

Since then, Chapman says, he has seen God work in a tremendous way in his church, bringing in young families, children, and a host of new members. That growth has been steady, constant, and exciting for the small church just south of



The land where the new Gilbertown Assembly of God Church is being cleared to get ready for construction, which is set to begin in 3 to 4 months.

Choctaw Sun photo by Tommy Campbell

Gilbertown.

"We've been at over 100 for at least eight months," he explains. "Our growth has been steady and constant. I've been amazed to see it grow like this. We've got people from newborn to 90 years old now, and we're expecting it to keep growing."

To accommodate that growth, the church is now beginning a project that will result in a much larger facility, one that Chapman says will not only fit their larger members, but will offer room to grow even more.

"We've been planning this for a couple of years

now," Chapman says. "We've maxed out our current facilities, and it's time to move forward."

Through what the pastor considers a miracle arranged by God, the church was offered the opportunity to purchase nearly 10 acres adjacent to their existing property. With land difficult to come by in that area, Chapman says that he knew God was at work to make it come to pass.

"It's really a miracle that we could get that land," he explains. "God has sent me the people, and now he's arranged for us to have some land to build on."

Plans are in the works for the church to build a 120' x 200' building on the new acreage beside the current facility. The building will contain a new 300-seating-capacity sanctuary, 10 Sunday School rooms, a kitchen, a large fellowship hall, and office space.

The addition of the 10 Sunday School rooms will double the number now being used in the old building. The additional rooms will allow the church to bring in more attendees and to divide classes when they grow to a certain number.

An important part of the church's activities, the

new fellowship hall will be 90' x 50', with plenty of space to hold the entire church body.

Construction on the new building is set to begin within the next 3 to 4 months, and will be completed in about a year. As for the old building, Chapman says that the church plans to use it for the youth.

Although the growth in membership and the construction of the new church building is exciting, Chapman says that he looks back at the earlier days — the days when there were mostly older members at the church — as a time for God

to work in his life and to get them ready for growth.

"I'm amazed at how God put the puzzle together," he says. "When there was mostly older people here, God was building a foundation between me and that generation. We formed a relationship so that when the younger people came in, we were strong and ready to grow."

"It came to the point where I was sure that we needed to do this," he adds. "We voted and it passed without opposition. Our people are on board with this."

Within the next few months, Gilbertown Assembly of God will begin construction on their new church building. They will begin to see the result of the growth that Chapman says God has been working toward for the past 8 years.

And the project is the next step in what Chapman considers his role in life, to grow God's church in a place that is filled with his family's legacy.

"It means a lot for me to continue the work here," he says.

When the new construction is complete, the church will be able to offer a facility large enough to accommodate those church members who are already active at the church, as well as the expected growth to come.

But, Chapman adds, the expansion is not merely about being able to grow in numbers. It is about being better able to bring others to Christ.

"We're not just building to build," he says, "We want to get them in, disciple them, and help them to grow."

Good Shepherds Ministries offers diploma level courses for local residents, ministers

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

MERIDIAN — "Our vision at Good Shepherds Ministries is that Jesus is honored, worshipped, glorified, and revered as Lord of lords and King of kings," says Dr. Debra Brewer of Meridian.

An educational ministry that was born in the living room of a Meridian minister is now reaching hundreds of students throughout the area, offering them the opportunity to obtain degrees in several areas of ministerial study without leaving home.

And that ministry is available to Choctaw County residents, as well.

Good Shepherds Ministries began in August, 2002, at the home of Shepherdess Debra Brewer in Meridian, with the first sessions including just 8 students. To date, membership has grown to hundreds of students and a faculty that includes some of the most influential doctorate level professors in their field.

Good Shepherd Ministries is affiliated with Beacon Institute of Ministry in Columbus, Georgia. Described as a 'college without walls', Beacon Institute is accredited by Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), and was created for the sole purpose of allowing students to gain in-depth Bible study and training without attending a residential college campus.

Beacon is also authorized by the Georgia Non-public Postsecondary Education Commission for granting AA, BA, MA, M. DIV., and D.Min degrees.

Over 94 pastors and teachers are included in the faculty of Good Shepherds Ministries, teaching more than 24,000 students in more than 273



Submitted photo
Pictured at Good Shepherds Ministries in Meridian are: (left to right) Elder Donald Boyd, Minister Lillie Cooks, Dr. Debra Brewer, Evangelist Clara Newell, Choctaw County minister Sherry Taylor, and Prophet Tyrone Bolden.

churches.

But Good Shepherds is not limited to reaching students in the United States. The organization oversees sites in 23 foreign countries to reach another 10,000 students across the world.

Students can choose from such courses as 'How to receive the anointing', 'Receiving Divine Revelation', 'Spiritual Warfare', 'Expository Preaching', the 'Theology of Spiritual Development' and courses that offer in-depth looks at various books of the Bible.

Instructors who are proven ministers in their particular field of expertise teach each course.

Courses are taught in short, intensive seminars held on three consecutive days each month, usually on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Each course, which is worth 3 semester hours, includes ten 50-minute classroom sessions, and students must commit to attend at

least 500 minutes of class time.

Students in Choctaw County, and throughout the Meridian and surrounding areas, can obtain diplomas in Biblical Studies and Advanced Ministerial Studies through Good Shepherds Ministries.

But according to Dr. Brewer, Good Shepherds Ministries is about more than simply offering opportunities for ministerial studies. The organization has established other ministries in the Meridian area.

"We have established various ministries to better facilitate reaching the mandates of the Good Shepherd," said Brewer in a letter describing her ministry. "Our commitment to the community is seen throughout our outreach programs."

Outreach ministries facilitated by Good Shepherds include 'Women of Virtue' ministry, evangelism through the Boys and Girls clubs of

Meridian, 'Youth with a Purpose' ministry, 'Golden Years' senior ministry, Tuesday night Bible study, and an intercessory prayer ministry.

For those from Choctaw County and the surrounding areas who opt to attend courses offered by Good Shepherds Ministries, there is a one-time registration fee of \$25 and tuition costs of \$150 per course. Tuition also includes the cost of textbooks and the syllabus for the course.

Being offered in Meridian for the month of February is the course 'Receiving Divine Revelation' with video instructor Dr. Fushia Pickett. Classes will be held on February 15, 16, and 17, with deadline for registration on February 12.

Good Shepherds is located at 3231 Officers Lake Road in Meridian.

For more information about Good Shepherds Ministries, contact Dr. Brewer at 601-693-5781

The Old Paths

I liked the old paths, when Moms were at home. Dads were at work. Brothers went into the army, and sisters got married BEFORE having children!

Crime did not pay; Hard work did; And people knew the difference.

Moms could cook; Dads would work; Children would behave..

Husbands were loving; Wives were supportive; And children were polite.

Women wore the dresses; And Men wore the pants. Women looked like ladies; Men looked like gentlemen; And children looked decent.

People loved the truth, And hated a lie; They came to church to get IN, Not to get OUT!

Hymns sounded Godly; Sermons sounded helpful; Rejoicing sounded normal; And crying sounded sincere.

Cursing was wicked; Drinking was evil; and divorce was unthinkable.

The flag was honored; America was beautiful; And God was welcome!

We read the Bible in public; Prayed in school; And preached from house to house

To be called an American was worth dying for; To be called a Christian was worth living for; To be called a traitor was a shame!

Sex was a personal word. Homosexual was an

unheard of word, And abortion was an illegal word.

Preachers preached because they had a message; And Christians rejoiced because they had the VICTORY!

Preachers preached from the Bible; Singers sang from the heart; And sinners turned to the Lord to be SAVED!

A new birth meant a new life; Salvation meant a changed life; Following Christ led to eternal life.

Being a preacher meant you proclaimed the word of God; Being a deacon meant you would serve the Lord; Being a Christian meant you would live for Jesus; And being a sinner meant someone was praying for you!

Laws were based on the Bible; Homes read the Bible; And churches taught the Bible.

Preachers were more interested in new converts than new clothes and new cars. God was worshiped; Christ was exalted; and the Holy Spirit was respected.

Church was where you found Christians on the Lord's day, rather than in the garden, on the creek bank, on the golf course, or being entertained somewhere else.

I still like the old paths the best!

"The Old Paths" was written by a retired minister who lives in Tennessee

Youth Day/Black History Program to be held at Shiloh Baptist Church in Silas Sunday, February 18 • 2 p.m. Guest speaker: Rev. Tim Pearson