

Gatlinburg Church of Christ

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By Creed Spurgeon

“And they spake unto Moses saying, the people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded Moses to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.” (Ex. 36: 5-7) Our building is finished and paid for, and we too, ask for no more contributions for our building fund. Our formal note-burning ceremonies will be held immediately after the A.M. worship service, November 8. J. Roy Vaughan, News Editor of the GOSPEL ADVOCATE, will preach for us at the morning and evening services. This will be the beginning of our fall meeting. Charles E. Crouch of Oak Ridge, Tennessee will preach each day at 7 P.M., November 9-15. Also we will have fifteen minutes free time (Monday-Friday) on our local radio station, WSEV 930 kc, 10:45 A.M., Sevierville, Tennessee.

As many of you know, the work here began in May, 1958, in a rented room in the Civic Auditorium, with six members under leadership of the writer and Brother Chambers. The church began to grow and the need for a building was growing also. On May 13, 1961, three lots were purchased for the sum of \$12,000 on Reagan Drive at Trinity Lane. We decided to pay for these lots and have a substantial down payment toward our building, before we began construction.

In March, 1964, we contracted with Blalock Construction Company, of Sevierville, Tennessee, for our building. In September of this same year our auditorium was completed with central air conditioning and heating, modern public address system, baptistry, dressing rooms and restrooms. On September 6, 1964, we held our first service in our new building. We borrowed additional chairs to use for the first services. Our church furniture was purchased from Rugle Manufacturing Company, Morristown, Tennessee, at a cost of just over \$3,200. Our building was designed by one of our local members, J. D. Tant, to seat 310 people in the auditorium. But, with the use of extra chairs we were able to accommodate 430 people. Since we occupied our building in 1964, we have finished three classrooms and a nursery.

In July, 1966, we purchased an additional 100 x 100' lot giving us four lots, with a total street frontage of 600 feet, and room for a minister's home, but this has been turned into extra parking area. In December, 1969, final payment was made on the building and lots.

In 1970 some improvements were necessary. We needed extra parking spaces, to pave the front and a sign for the lawn. Total cost for these improvements was \$5,000 and final payment will be made on this note in October. All the money for our building and lots was borrowed from the First National Bank of Gatlinburg, six months at a time, with six per cent interest, allowing us to repay as we could and renew each six months.

The first year the church was in Gatlinburg our weekly attendance averaged about forty people, with the contribution near \$50. In 1966 attendance had grown to an average of 114, and the average contribution was \$150. For the first nine months of this year, the average attendance has been 160, and the average weekly contribution \$235.55.

From the original six charter members, all of whom are still active, we have grown to a membership of thirty. There have been some twenty-five baptisms.

The writer and Harold Chambers serve as elders for the congregation. We are enjoying peace and harmony. Since the beginning of the congregation in 1958, I have done all the preaching for the church with few exceptions, but due to failing health I felt I could no longer carry the full load. In April, 1969, the Whitehall Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, sponsored Raymond B. Garner to help with the work. Brother Garner will be here until at least April 1, 1971. We are fortunate to have as our song leader, Harse Ray, who purchased the Smoky Mountain Private Campground on Highway 73 E, and moved here from Mississippi.

Earlier this year I spent several days in the hospital and I am still unable to do a great deal.

Gatlinburg is undoubtedly the capital of the Smokies. In 1969 some 6,310,000 people visited the Smokies, most of them entering through Gatlinburg. A greater number is expected this year. In our services we have visitors from every state in the Union, and some foreign countries. Among our visitors we have people from most all

denominations, and we try to keep a good supply of tracts on display. If anyone has good tracts available, we sure could use them. To date this year we have had nearly 6,000 visitors at our services and, with the help of many, we have provided them a place to worship God. The church here was begun with the many visitors in mind as well as the local people.

The total cost of our building and lots, including interest, was approximately \$70,000. We sincerely thank the many friends who have helped us to be able to burn our mortgage. We extend the warmest invitation to any who can to come and be with us on this occasion.

We recently began to help Happy Haven Home for the Children in Cookeville, Tennessee, and Tennessee Orphan Home in Springhill, Tennessee.

We are grateful to J. Roy Vaughan and B. C. Goodpasture for the great help they have given us through the GOSPEL ADVOCATE.