



## A Note from Michael

When I was a youngster, about eight years old, my mother used to sit me down in front of the TV, along with my other brothers and sister, on a Saturday evening. We would watch the Lawrence Welk Show while my mother curled my sister's hair so it would be ready for church the following day. There was a couple on the show by the name of Guy and Ralna that were known for singing a wonderful hymn by the name of "Little Brown Church in the Vale." Have you heard of the song? Did you know that there really is such a church? The Little Brown Church in the Vale sits in a beautiful park, alongside Highway 218 in the town of Bradford, IA (near Nashua). The church, however, wasn't there when the song was written.

It was a bright afternoon in 1857 when New York native and young music teacher, William Pitts, was traveling by stagecoach from his home in Wisconsin to visit his future wife in Fredericksburg, IA. While waiting for the stagecoach horses to be changed in Bradford, he walked down Cedar Street and saw this empty lot where the church now stands. Being a romantic young man, the thought came to him of what a charming setting the spot would make for a church. Returning home, he wrote the poem, "Church in the Wildwood," and later set it to music. He put it in a drawer and forgot it.

Meanwhile, church members of the Puritan-Congregational Church in Bradford had grown tired of meeting in places such as the lawyer's office and abandoned stores and began making plan to build a church. A family in the parish donated the church property. In 1860 the foundation was laid.

The Civil War slowed the work, but the work never really ceased. By 1862 the building was enclosed, and not a penny had been spent. When it came time to paint the building, the cheapest paint to be found was Ohio Mineral Paint which would protect the wood but which was unhappily brown.

In the same year, Mr. Pitts moved to Fredericksburg to be near his wife's elderly parents; he was hired to teach a singing class at the Bradford Academy. Imagine his surprise when he saw a little brown church nestled in the very trees where he had stood some years before. He had written a song for a church that wasn't there; the congregation had painted their little church brown without ever hearing of the song. He went home and found the song and taught it to his class. They later sang it at the dedication service of the church.

*(rest of the story on the back)*

## Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 ~ A Time for Everything

All the verses (1-13) are worth the time to read and the time to reflect. But, verses 12 and 13 speak volumes and with clarity. 12: I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. 13: That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil-this is the gift of God.

Early Monday morning Steve and Nancy Huckaba, Dolo Wishard, Paul Icenogle and I met in the FCC garden, to explore ideas to improve the beauty and ambiance of this special place. Paul had the ideas and we were all thrilled to listen and envision the changes that were offered. There are some specific changes like grass reseeding, bush transplants and adding colorful plants, but the discussions didn't end there. Paul invited us to look at his drawing of the Old State Road property and his larger vision for creating a unique setting that would grace our land and better yet, we receive the gift of God. In a way, it becomes an outdoor sanctuary. The possibilities to meet God here are endless.

It seems that all good things come from inspiration. But that is also just the beginning. Planning needs to be done, resources need to be tapped and commitments need to be made. Without action, an inspired vision only remains a passing thought. So, our action is to think in stages for the Old State Property and initially narrow the scope to two items. First, we believe that a FCC community garden is possible at the Northwest corner of the property. The logistics have to be worked out for materials for some raised beds, choice of plants, ability to provide water to the garden and labor to maintain the integrity of the area. Secondly, we believe that we can enhance the natural beauty of the area with some landscaping and colorful plants and flowers. All in all, a little piece of Heaven, on earth.

Our need at this point is simple. We need to determine if our congregation is ready to take this vision and make it a reality. Verse 13: That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil-this is the gift of God. If you can grasp the vision and want more information or if you want to become involved physically and/or financially, or just need additional information, please call our church office (234-2928) and let us know. It is a commitment to say "yes, I can help". And together, the load will be surely be lessened and the burden lighter. Think about it, pray about it and let God lead you. The sooner we hear from you, the better. Planting season is upon us soon. Thank you and may God bless you.

*Jim Buford*

Michael's story continued....

William Pitts sold his manuscript to a publisher in Chicago for \$25. He used the money to enroll in Rush Medical College and spent the rest of his life as the town physician in Fredericksburg.

Today the Little Brown Church boasts a membership of about 100, but it's best known now for the thousands of weddings and tourists who flock there each year by the wildwood, the little brown church in the vale.

The song, "Little Brown Church in the Vale," continues to be sung by church members, as a response to the Benediction.

*Michael Tomlinson*

## Devo with Stevo

On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings you can join me on Facebook Live as we go thru a devotion on the book of Jeremiah. John 6:35 Jesus states, "I am the Bread of Life." So, at 6:35 am you can join me as we partake of spiritual bread! He is our stronghold!

*Pastor Morgan*

## Shoes for Journey



Journey Campton is a 2 year old girl from Mattoon that is currently fighting stage 4 cancer. Our church is participating in a fundraiser for her by collecting gently used shoes. An organization called Funds2Orgs

will then donate money based on the weight of the shoes into her account. Shoes can be taken to the Ed. door of the church and follow the prompts in the window. To learn more, go to Facebook and search her name. If you would like to donate money, there is a benefit account at First Mid set-up under her name. If you have any questions you can contact Donica Brand. Thank you.



We extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Louise Wiley (93) who passed away on April 18th.

## Information

Our worship services will continue to be offered online. We have two ways for you to access the service. If you are on Facebook we encourage you to watch the service live at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings. If you miss it at 10:30 it will still be available for viewing later. However, watching it together at 10:30 allows us to praise God in unison as one body and we have also incorporate communion into the service. What better way to take communion than taking it together. So be sure and have bread and juice available and prepare your heart to receive the Lord's Supper.

If you're online, but do not want to create a Facebook account, you can listen to the sermon after it is uploaded to the church website ([www.mattoonfcc.com](http://www.mattoonfcc.com)). Please be aware, the sermon is not uploaded on the web site until later in the week and it only includes the sermon.

The church continues to work diligently to build the Kingdom. And God's work depends upon your continued financial support. Therefore we have provided a new option for you to make your contributions electronically. You can go online to [tithe.ly](http://tithe.ly) or you can download the [tithe.ly](http://tithe.ly) app to your smart phone. This app allows you to sign in and make contributions one at a time or you can set it up to make automatic recurring contributions from your debit or credit card, or via ACH checking from you bank. If electronic giving is not your "tithe thing", don't forget about the reliable US Mail.

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