



LBC Has a New Home

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Article Photo



T-R PHOTO BY MIKE DONAHEY

Pictured is Pastor Randy Mason of Marshalltown's Liberty Baptist Church near the main entrance of the congregation's new home at Nine N. Fifth Ave. LBC recently purchased the building formerly used by Grace United Methodist Church.

Pastor Randy Mason of Marshalltown's Liberty Baptist Church is also a pilot employed by the Pella Corporation. Federal Aviation Administration rules require Mason to file a flight plan prior to departure.

Contrast the flight plan requirement with LBC, which ironically, according to Mason, never had a specific plan to purchase their new home at Nine N. Fifth Ave. That property had been the site of Grace United Methodist Church. It

experienced declining membership and merged with First United Methodist Church. For several years, LBC had been leasing the former Hillside Church of Christ property at 2205 S. Center St.

Oct. 4 will be the dedication. It will give LBC three and one-half times more room. It's needed. About four and one-half years ago, the four member Mason family made up LBC. Soon they were joined by a small group of Hispanics Now, there are about 150 active members, he said.

Since religions became formally established, church's, mosques or synagogues have either remained static, declined and closed or grew and flourished. A church will fold and move out of a building and another will take its place. Other vacancies occur when church's outgrow their original location.

Unique for LBC is how they arrived at this chapter in their short life.

"Our motto is 'Faith Ablaze,' really we have never set out so to speak, to accomplish what we wanted to do," Mason said. "Our objective is to live our faith trust God and wherever God opens the door, that is where we will walk through."

In describing the eventual purchase, Mason figuratively described the number of doors the congregation walked through.

When asked how the purchase of their new home came to be, Mason said fittingly, that one had to start with the church's beginning.

Since Mason and his family were the church's original members, his past history melds with that of the church.

A Marshalltown native, Mason said he went away to Liberty Baptist College (now known as Liberty University). in Virginia. He lived in the state for 18 years, before returning to Marshalltown in 2000. While in Virginia, Mason worked as a pilot for a North Carolina textile company. His job periodically took him to the Honduras where he became acquainted with the Hispanic population.

The link with that country proved to be critical. Mason said he developed an affection for the Hispanic people. He learned the Spanish language.

Mason said God inspired him to start LBC in late 2004. In January 2005 the church was born. He had been ministering to a small group of Hispanics through another church and they became members.

"We had no denominational support, we had no outside support and we didn't know how we were going to pay the rent," Mason said. "We had a four

month lease and we didn't know if we would be able to stay beyond four months. It was just a total leap of faith."

A businessman whom Mason said he has never met, agreed to pay the church's first three months rent and utilities. The church grew and so did its financial resources. In the summer of 2006 the congregation decided thinking about a permanent facility.

However, Mason said "God put it upon my heart to build a church for someone else long before we would even think about building a church of our own."

Mason said he talked to a number of Hispanic pastors in Honduras and learned of the need for five churches. One was estimated to cost to build about \$12,000, which is what the LBC had saved in its first 18 months.

According to information from the church's Web site, www.libertybaptistofmarshalltown.com, it was "in Sept. 2006 that LBC voted to send \$12,000 to Wiwili, Nicaragua to build a church for a group of believers who were in need of a place to meet."

Several church members attend the dedication of the Nicaraguan church in 2007. Appropriately, it was named after LBC. It is Iglesia Bautista Liberta Mision Buen Samaritano.

In November, 2006, LBC agreed to purchase seven acres of ground for \$120,000 on Iowa Avenue near new Highway 30. The owner agreed to give them six months to raise the money, which the congregation did and the land was bought in cash in Aug. 2007. The congregation did not want to borrow money from a bank and deal with interest payments.

It was also in 2006 that Mason heard the GUMC property might be available.

"I went and walked around the outside of it," he said. "Communication never went beyond that. Nothing transpired."

In 2007 Mason learned the property was for sale and checked it out. "It (the sale process) never went anywhere. It was out of site and out of mind."

This year Mason said the church was at a crossroads.

"The congregation believed it need to have permanent facilities," he said. "We had to make a decision to either purchase the facility we were in, find another facility and we didn't know where we could find a million dollars to build a new facility (on Iowa Avenue). We didn't see that on the horizon."

"Then in May of this year, through God opening doors, this property, this church we purchased came back in the loop again. We went and looked at it.

I told the congregation that "if God wants us to buy this, he has to open some doors, because we don't have the resources."

Mason said FUMC, which owned the former GUMC property, made an initial offer on the property.

"Between them coming down from the original sale price and us going up, we wrote a check and paid cash for it last Friday," (Aug. 28.) Mason said.

"We never envisioned owning this facility, God dropped it into our laps."

Mason said he told the congregation that most of our failures are "prayer failures and faith failures. I asked the congregation to pray about the decision to buy the property and "if it was in their hearts to give to it or not to give a penny. We had people giving from \$25 to \$50,000."

Additional negotiations followed. LBC believed in raising all of the money within the congregation, it did not want to go to a bank.

"Faith ablaze, trust in God and pray if you want to, to have the building. But the last door that God opened for us was to provide the financing."

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