

“Close...but....!”

Good grief! Has it been since the end of November that I last wrote and bemoaned the fact that my wife had put the screws to me regarding finishing the barn? Yep, it has, and many of you identified with that article so much that you haven't stopped asking me if I finished it by the 20 December deadline. And the answer is, “Well, I did a lot, so I got close...but...!” My wife would answer that same question by simply say'n, “Nope, still not finished!” But in my defense, getting close is better than nutt'n I'd say. And I got distracted by...well...life...just say'n!

You know, life just happens sometimes and distractions are a constant. We had some other “unfinished projects” to get done around the house, so we decided to knock a few of those out as well. But after not quite getting the barn finished, we decided to call in the pros for some of the other projects...and we did. Randy Day and his brother-n-law, Mike, are those pros and so after about a week in the house, waa-laaa...the interior projects are not close to being finished...they are finished! Did I just hear the angels singing? No, but I think Kim did! And man does it look good. I told Kim, if it took two pros a week to do what they did, why it'd taken me, oh, I don't know, maybe another 17 years to get it done. So, hiring them was definitely the right move. And they managed to make Kim happy because they didn't get close to finishing, nope, they actually finished, got their stuff and moved on to their next project. And you know what they say, “When Mama's happy, everybody's happy,” or something akin to that!

Man...ain't life good when you work with folks who know how to git-r-dun! But since I last wrote, those life distractions came, you know, like Thanksgiving, Christmas, holidays, etc. And then there was that thing that hangs over my head every fall...deer season. And try as I might, I managed somehow to let every deer in the woods slip by me the last week of the season without me seeing hide nor hair of one. Again, I got close to filling the freezer, but I didn't finish filling it. Oh well, already thinking about next year.

And speaking of getting close, many of you ask from time to time about Randy Day's grandfather's old '72 Ford step-side I have been working on for about five years now. Well, I'm not finished, I know, no surprise there, and I'm not close to finishing, but I'm definitely getting closer. Thanks to David Brooks, I got the motor in and it's running. When that hopped up 300 in-line six with all the goodies attached fired up, man oh man, it was a glorious moment. I actually think I did hear the angels sing...just say'n! I'm hoping that by the time my oldest grand, Lettie, is driving, she'll be able to take that old truck with the three-on-the-tree for a spin...which means I only have ten more years to finish it. Yep, getting close...but...

Speaking of getting close, many wonder about our new office. And well, we are ready, I mean ready to move dirt and break ground and move this thing along, but at the moment, we are close...but..., not quite there. I couldn't be more pleased with the giving thus far to the LBA Building Fund. In just 17 months, since we had the kick-off BBQ, we have received approximately (it changes daily), \$191,235.89 from both churches and individuals. Praise God for both! And more churches are coming on board

with plans to give regularly to the project. Abbeville First approved giving the substantial amount of \$12,000 per year till the project is paid off, and two other churches called this week about contributing to the project. Thank you to the pastoral leadership in all of our churches that have and will continue to give, and to the good folks in those churches who believe in the work of the local association. Our many church's gifts to date, \$83,765.00, is getting us close...but...

And then there are the many individuals, apart from their church's gifts, who have been donating so incredibly to the LBA Building Fund. Of the \$191,235.89 thus far given, \$107,470.00 of that has come from individuals, giving small gifts, large gifts, one-time gifts and multiple gifts over time. They all add up, and I pray God will bless each giver, as these gifts push us closer to the goal of building this new office that will serve all of our churches for many decades to come, or until Christ Himself comes, to which I say, “Come Lord Jesus, come!”

And then you add to that \$191,235.89, from churches and individual gifts, the \$208,000 we received from the sale of our old office, and that puts us at \$399,235.89 in our LBA Building Fund. Yep, the next few dollars given will begin to push us towards the half-a-million-dollar mark. It's all getting us close...but...!

This past Sunday I had the privilege of attending the building (sanctuary) dedication at Lowndesville Baptist Church and what a beautiful job they did. And the best part of it, due to the gifts of generous and blessed individuals who have a Kingdom mindset, that church was built and completed, and on Dedication Day (Sunday), it was paid for, just under one million dollars, paid for, lock, stock and barrel. PTL! I rejoice with them and know that God will use that facility, under the leadership of Pastor Fred Griggs, to bring glory to God who made it all possible.

I want to do what I am never comfortable doing. I want to throw out a challenge to all who love the Association and have been blessed by God with resources, to let's continue to give until we not just get close...but until we cross the finish line with this building. I have been so encouraged by the gifts so far, I just pray that God will put it on your hearts to give all you can towards this effort. Remember, the less we have to borrow, the less we will have to pay in interest to pay back a loan, thus, the more we will have to do Kingdom work when this project is completed. Will you please help the Association cross the finish line? We have everything in place to build; the land, drawings, permits, DHEC approval...we are just waiting on God to give us the thumbs up to begin digging. And you are a huge part in our preparation to do so. So, for all who having given so sacrificially, and for those who will continue to give, thank you from the depths of my heart. ...may the Lord bless each of you real good!

Speaking of being close...but..., aren't we glad that Jesus didn't come to earth and almost secure our pardon from sin. Man oh man, when Jesus left glory, He did so with the full intent of fulfilling His role, no matter the cost, in being the Savior of the world, the spotless Lamb of God who takes away our sin. And we know He didn't fall short, because the last breath He breathed on the cross, was “tetelestai,” which means, “It is finished.” He completed His task, now, may we complete ours.

Maybe that is why Paul admonished us to “finish the race set before us.” I pray that with your unwavering generosity, we will begin...and finish...this building soon, to the glory of God. Amen!