

# A Time to Build

We are building at St Marys – just in case anyone hadn't noticed! It is exciting, challenging and there are spiritual lessons to be learned on the way. It would be a great pity if we became so focused on what we would call practical problems that we miss what the Lord is saying. We speak from experience. Here at Redacre, we seem to be always constructing



something but the big one was when we had a word from the Lord, saying to build a house and a chapel. Furthermore we had to build it ourselves. Words that we did not even know were in the Bible seemed to jump from the pages. "They shall build houses and inhabit them ----- and my chosen ones shall enjoy the work of their hands."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from not knowing how to build a house (and we tried to remedy that by reading and watching builders at work) money was a problem. It usually is, on a big project! Sometimes we went right to the edge financially, quite literally to our last penny, but the Lord always provided. More often than we would have wished, this help came at the last minute. We learned afresh to pray and trust. The temptation was to rush in with our own bright ideas and neglect prayer, or to pray and then not to trust! Yet on this way we saw many answers to our prayers and often the Lord added little extra touches of his love, so that we knew it really was him. For instance, a Sister was looking down on our building site. All over the foundation slab were neatly stacked piles of bricks and blocks. They had been carried by hand because we had no access from the road. As she looked she thought, "Ebenezer - hitherto has the Lord helped us". She shared this with the community. Imagine our surprise when the next day a letter arrived from someone we didn't know, and enclosed was a gift of money. We looked at the address it was, "Ebenezer Cottage"!

It was tempting to take shortcuts with both finance and the building. More times than we can enumerate over the years we have been offered a way of avoiding VAT. Sometimes, it would have saved us thousands of pounds. We have a holy, heavenly Father. It is the way of the world to be dishonest. There was no desire to leave his will because we knew that if we did, he would no longer provide for us. We were often misunderstood. Yet we felt that some, at least, respected us for it.

Shortcuts with the building meant trouble in the future, so we often chose a more expensive option. The windows and doors were an example of this. There was a choice of soft wood, hard wood and UPVC. The windows and doors recommended to us were German, UPVC, very good quality but expensive. The shell of the chapel and house were completed but they needed to be sealed. We had funds for two thirds of the work! We were prepared to board up the other openings, if necessary. To add to our other anxieties one of the Sisters

was diagnosed with cancer. On many occasions we piled into the partially completed building seeking the comfort and strength of the Lord. It was as if God was waiting for us there, in a special way, and peace crept back into our hearts. The walls were grey block and bleak, but God was there and he comforted and encouraged us.

The foundations could be viewed from an upstairs window in Redacre. Bricks marked out the rooms and these were filled with concrete leaving the remainder of the house still to be brought up to floor level. As we looked down we saw a perfect blue cross stretching from end to end and side to side. It was the damp proof membrane that had not yet been covered in the corridors. The cross was literally built into the foundations. In our garden we have a plaque on which is written, "My Father, I do not understand you but I trust you".<sup>2</sup> This is the bottom line with trust. It is the only firm ground when problems seem insurmountable.

The cross came in other ways. Our hearts are exposed in difficult circumstances. The, "I am right", "My way is best", "I want", "I know deep down that I am wrong but I don't like admitting it", all come to the fore. Impatience can trip us up. It is difficult but we have to recognise that it is sin. If we stop and listen to the Holy Spirit, find forgiveness at the cross of Christ, then not only will the building grow but we will too! More than the building the Lord wants new hearts. This was our experience.



Of course, there was lots of joy, too. We had a celebration when the roof was in place. We can recommend this! We enjoyed going upstairs the difficult way, by a ladder, because we couldn't afford a staircase. Two Sisters worked on the roof and loved the glorious

view. Wonderful friends helped us. When it was completed we had a magnificent Service of Thanksgiving, all the struggles forgotten!

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<sup>1</sup> Is. 65:21-22 RSV

<sup>2</sup> Mother Basilea