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Haymore Baptist Church*

By R.J. BERRIER
News Staff Writer

In that Christmas is a traditional time, this is a Christmas story, for it is a story of a Bible class that knew its roots and decided to honor them. It is also a brief look at the history of one of Mount Airy's better-known churches.

Before there was a Haymore Memorial Baptist Church...before there was a Second Baptist Church of Mount Airy, there was a Workers' Mission.

That was 80 years ago — back in 1910 — and Workers' Mission was located at the corner of Price and Marshall streets. Workers' Mission was the ward of First Baptist Church of Mount Airy. In fact, it was in 1907 that that venerable church's pastor, the Rev. J.E. Smith, saw the need for such a mission in the southern portion of town.

The Rev. Smith was a doer, as well as a thinker. He and his two sons, with the help of area residents, began the Mission's foundations, and the building was completed three years later.

That's a part of the history of Haymore Memorial Baptist Church, standing serenely atop a knoll on Rockford Street, the church home of many hundreds of people for nearly seven decades.

The Rev. C.C. Haymore was the first pastor and Haymore Memorial Baptist is named in his honor, as well as that of his brother, Rufe Haymore, who donated \$20,000 to the church. The Rev. Robert McCrary, the present pastor, assumed his duties there last year.

A class of Haymore Memorial Baptist Church recently called attention to the roots of the church in a most unique way. A new classroom there is furnished in a style reminiscent of the Workers' Mission days of the church.

The Workers' Mission Bible Class of Haymore Memorial Baptist Church held an open house Sunday, Dec. 2, displaying its quarters decorated in a turn-of-the-century, country theme.

The class, which was only started in February, was named in memory of those who actually started what is now Haymore Memorial Baptist Church 83 years ago.

Richard Pardue teaches the class and Tycho Wood Sr. is its president. Other class leaders are Mrs. Inez Belton, compassion and benevolent

chairman; Mrs. Pansy Wood, secretary; Mrs. Dot Strayhorn, outreach leader; and Mrs. Roger Moody, entertainment and activities chairman.

Other members of the class include Carl Norman, Virginia Norman, Linda Goins, Edgar Draughn, Johnnie Fulk, Dean McGrady, Raybern Wright, Evelyn Wright, Lettie Woodruff, Betty Dowell, Lloyd Mabry, Wavy Mabry, Harold Stein, Doris Stein, Roger Moody, M.B. Williamson Jr., Ralph Gunnell Jr., Dolly Gunnell, Scott Bowman, Lorraine Moser and Donald E. Smith.

"While our purpose is to minister to those of our age, we come together with a deep appreciation for those early Christians of the year 1907 who wanted to worship our Lord so much that they formed the Workers' Mission," a class spokesman noted. "It is with honor and a great deal of admiration that we chose this name, Workers' Mission Bible Class of Haymore Church."

But it is the furnishings of this old/new class that are absolutely striking. It resembles a page out of history — Haymore Baptist history, that is.

Class members and guests are seated on 35 old-fashioned kitchen chairs, some of which came out of the original Workers' Mission. Others were purchased from The Salvation Army for \$2 each. Their seats are plywood with 1½-inch foam cushions upholstered in country blue.

A double-pedestal table there, made completely by Pardue, the class teacher, is fashioned with a puritan pine top. Between the two pedestals is carved a heart, carrying out the class theme of "Love."

The period-piece furnishings also include a Hitchcock chair — bought from Goodwill Industries and refinished — and a teacher's desk in country blue, also made with a puritan pine top. The president's lectern was homemade by Pardue.

Additionally, the room furnishings include a pie safe designed to set the blood of any collector tingling. It, naturally, features punched-tin doors. Sitting atop it is an antique milk glass hobnail lamp, which will also set the salivary glands of most collectors functioning overtime.

"Members of the class and others paid for the remodeling with love offerings," Pardue said.

Pardue has been teaching Sunday school for most of his adult life — since returning to Mount Airy from the Army at the end of World War II. He started a class in 1954 and taught

until 1988, when he took a year's sabbatical.

"Then I started back with this class," Pardue noted. The Workers' Mission class was first housed in a smaller room at the church. The idea for the new room and the old-style decor surfaced in 1989. The class voted to do the remodeling and the work started up, lasting some five months.

The men of the class did the woodwork — the door and window facings, baseboard and wood trim. Pardue made the facings at the base in his workshop at home. It all carries out the old-fashioned, turn-of-the-century styling that is prevalent. The Shaker (Pennsylvania Dutch) style is easily recognizable.

The lustrous wood theme is furthered in the frames, hat rack, wall sconces, bulletin board frame, coat racks and so forth.

The Rev. McCrary was "inspiring" in helping the class with its project, Pardue said.

This is also a Christmas story in its sharing quality, which is associated with the holiday season.

The class teacher, who provided the information for this segment of local history and did much of the actual work, downplayed his role in this extensive classroom renovation/refurbishing project. Instead, he repeatedly shared the credit and emphasized the role played by the entire class and the pastor, the Rev. McCrary, in making this bit of church history live anew for the benefit of present and future members of the church family.