

## One Last Thing, Pastor

For almost sixty-two years the church was privileged to have the service of Elder Addison Downey. Addison became a member in 1908 when the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Coulterville disbanded. In 1913 he was elected to an elder's position, a position that he kept until his death in 1974. Addison and his wife Burleigh had four children – Margaret, Ruth Evelyn, Dorothy, and Donald. Each one of them was a faithful member of the church until they married and moved away. Dorothy married Pat Hoffman, Jr. and moved to Oregon where she still resides. Margaret, Ruth Evelyn, and Donald all moved to Red Bank where they attended the Red Bank Presbyterian Church for many years along with a number of other displaced Sale Creek Presbyterian Church members belonging to the Hood, Mayberry, Roark, and Coppinger families.

Daughter Margaret graduated from high school in 1936 and went to college where she earned a mathematics degree. For many years she taught junior high mathematics and algebra at Red Bank Junior High. I look back with many fond memories to district wide teachers' meeting where I sat on the "Downey bench" with all my cousins who were teachers – Margaret, Donald, Happy Downey (Donald's wife), and their first cousin Eunice Taylor.

Each of Addison's children followed their Christian upbringing throughout their life, and Margaret was a shining example to her family, neighbors and colleagues. She was a faithful prayer warrior as she prayed daily for her sons and other members of her family, and she was a diligent student of the Bible each day.

Margaret was quick of wit and had a very good sense of humor even about her own physical characteristics. She had a very distinctive voice that distinguished her in any crowd. One time at the funeral of another relative, the pastor spoke of how we would receive new bodies when we get to heaven, new limbs free from infirmities, etc. Roger and I were sitting next to Margaret, and she leaned over to us and whispered, "I hope the Lord gives me a new voice." There was a slight hiccup in funeral decorum on that pew for just a couple of minutes while we collected ourselves from Margaret's whispered comment.

Margaret eventually retired from the teaching profession in the late 1970's and devoted her time to her family, especially her two sons. She never slacked in her support for her church either.

In the early 1990's Margaret was diagnosed with cancer, and in spite of all the treatments that she was given, her condition continued to deteriorate. In her continually deteriorating physical shape, she was never bitter but trusted in her savior's omniscience and goodness. She was not one to complain, and her only concern was for her husband and two sons that she would be leaving behind.

During the time of Margaret's illness, she was visited regularly by the pastor of the Red Bank Presbyterian Church who prayed with her and her husband, Hubert, and asked for God's will to be accomplished and for her deliverance from the pain that she suffered. In spite of all that the doctors could do, her condition worsened once again, and it became evident that she was near death. Once again and for the last time, her pastor arrived at her home on Daytona Drive to see her. After sitting with her in her bedroom where she was bedridden, he prayed one last time with her and then left the room.

The pastor and Hubert walked far enough away from the bedroom that Margaret could not hear them talk, and then the pastor began to speak to him about last requests and other things that would need to be handled in the next few days. Finally, the question was asked in hushed tones, “Hubert, does Margaret have any favorite scripture passage that you think she would like for her funeral?”

A suddenly strong voice came from Margaret’s bedroom, “Romans...chapter 8.” Margaret had heard every word and was intent on the eighth chapter of Romans being the text for her funeral.

Romans 8:18 – For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Romans 8:28 – And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:37 – In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

God blessed those of us who knew Margaret Downey Thomas.