

The Church With a Liberal Lean

Conservative, liberal, right wing, left wing, leaning to the right, leaning to the left. These are all terms that describe philosophies and theologies of political and religious groups. In the latter years of the 1800's, there was a local country church in Sale Creek that had a very distinctive liberal lean, but it had nothing to do with either philosophy or theology.

The New Providence community is located approximately four miles east of Sale Creek at the end of Pitty Pat Hollow. The little community then was a farming community of very conservative Christian farming families. In the late years of the 1800's the members of the community decided to construct a church and affiliate themselves with the Methodist congregations of Hamilton County. Construction began in earnest with different members of the congregation lending their construction skills. Before too much time had elapsed, the building began to take shape with the framing rising off the rock foundation.

While the building was in this critical stage of construction, a windstorm developed one day. The wind was very strong that day, and its force caused the framed structure to lean about five degrees to the left. Imagine everyone's surprise and disappointment when they viewed their new building and discovered that it had a very definite lean that must be corrected before construction could be completed.

The construction crew tried pulling the building back into line by attaching ropes to it and pulling while a carpenter checked the plumb during the pull. This did not help any. Tying ropes to the building and then going around trees with it and pulling as hard as possible did not help either. Next teams of horses and mules were hitched to the building. Then the handlers made the teams pull as hard as they could. Still the animals were not able to pull the building back into line with the plumb bob.

After all known processes for straightening the building were exhausted, the determination was made that there were only two courses of action remaining – either tear the building down and start over or finish the building as it was. The decision was made to do the latter, and the building was completed with an approximate five degree lean to the left. Passing in front of the church, the lean is very detectable.

The New Providence Methodist Church has continued for over 100 years with the leftward lean or the liberal lean to the left; however, if one walks around behind the church and looks at it, then there is a conservative lean to the right. I guess it is all in one's position and perspective.

Note: The lean of the church building has nothing to do with the beliefs of the congregation that has always remained solidly fundamental.