

Sunday, February 23, 2025

Scripture Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

The church is the church only when it exists for others. — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Near the quiet town of Nashua, Iowa, nestled among the rolling hills and verdant fields, stands a humble yet iconic place of worship known as The Little Brown Church in the Vale. This charming structure, with its distinctive brown exterior, is more than just a building; it is a testament to unwavering faith, community spirit, and the enduring power of God's love.

The Little Brown Church began at a time when the country was divided by tensions over the issue of slavery. Despite limited resources and the challenges posed by the Civil War, the founders pressed on with their mission. They trusted that God would provide, and indeed, God did. Their perseverance bore fruit, and the church was completed and dedicated in 1864.

In subsequent decades, the church became famous thanks to the popularity of the hymn inspired by this very church, "Come to the Church in the Wildwood."

*There's a church in the vale by the wildwood, / No lovelier spot in the dale;
No place is so dear to my childhood, / As the little brown church in the vale.*

Refrain

*Come to the church in the wildwood, / Oh, come to the church in the dale,
No spot is so dear to my childhood, / As the little brown church in the vale.*

Its lyrics speak of a sanctuary that offers peace, comfort and a place to commune with God, far removed from the noise and distractions of the world. The hymn reminds us that no matter where we are, God's presence is a sanctuary for our weary souls.

In the Reconstruction period after the Civil War, the church closed for a while as the country went through an economic downturn. But after reopening, it began to flourish, and today, thousands visit the Little Brown Church every year as tourists, or to worship or even get married. It still stands after a little more than 160 years as a beacon of hope and faithfulness.

Its existence encourages us to remain steadfast in our own lives, knowing that our efforts in the Lord's work are never in vain. "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: O God, thank you for your church through which you express yourself to the world.
Amen.*

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Romans 1-4
- Monday:** Romans 5-8
- Tuesday:** Romans 9-11
- Wednesday:** Romans 12-16
- Thursday:** Proverbs 1-3
- Friday:** Proverbs 4-7
- Saturday:** Psalms 19-21

Verse to Remember

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. —Psalm 19:14 (NIV)

7-WORD SPLIT

CLUES

SOLUTIONS

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. To feel relaxed and at ease (11 letters) | _____ |
| 2. To sip (5 letters) | _____ |
| 3. An unwelcome joke at another’s expense (5 letters) | _____ |
| 4. Winsome and attractive (6 letters) | _____ |
| 5. To evaluate carefully, consider (5 letters) | _____ |
| 6. Relative (6 letters) | _____ |
| 7. Preparing an orange, say (7 letters) | _____ |

DIRECTIONS

Study the numbered clues in the list to the left. Find a word to match each clue. The number in parentheses at the end of each clue represents the number of letters in each solution. You can only use each letter combination once, but you will need every one to finish the puzzle.

Answers below.

PE PRE NG FO TTY US

IN BLE INK WEI RTA CO

DR PRA GH COM ELI NK



BRAIN TEASER: Here are three words:
job, polish, herb.
 What is special or interesting about these words?
(Answer to the right)

Answer: Each one is pronounced differently when the first letter is capitalized!

SOLUTION:
 1-com/fo/rtta/ble
 2-dr/ink
 3-pra/nk
 4-pre/tty
 5-wei/gh
 6-co/us/in
 7-pe/eli/ng