A house built with miracles

by John Sullivan

BROUSSARD — At times the sound is almost deafening along St. Morgan Street. There's hammering, the roar of generators, the buzz of electric saws, a crane lifting sheets of roofing and the constant hum of dozens of people talking and working and taking some more.

The First Baptist Church of Broussard is getting a new building and it's being done in less than a third of the actual time that most structures this size go up in.

But, you ask pastor Bert Langley and he'll just smile and tell you that there's something special going on at 210 St. Morgan.

"Everywhere you look, you see the hand of God at work here," Langley said. "God's blessings and His work are here — you just have to look to see."

The First Baptist Church is getting a new building through the services of Carpenters for Christ and Campers on Mission.

By last Friday, Carpenters for Christ had about 90 people representing 14 states working on the church's new education building.

Langley said these are the shock troops; they "come on to a site and just blitz it." The Campers on Mission will do more of the detail work at the site, he said.

Langley added that he couldn't say enough good things about these two groups.

"We needed some help and these folks came," Langley, a tall man who smiles easily as he shows visitors through the maze of the construction site.

Carpenters for Christ, he said, will leave this Friday with the building almost 85 percent complete. About the only thing left to do will be to "float in the insulation and drop the ceiling," Langley said.

Carpenters for Christ comes at a pretty steep price, Langley said. Actually, he said laughing, "this group comes down to a church and literally builds it from the ground up and leaves with the project almost complete."

For many of the Carpenters for Christ, these two weeks are their vacation — and they spend $150 each "to come down here and work. They even bring their own cook. They get no compensation for what they're doing, except for the thrill of doing it. The only thing they ask is that we give them desserts."

A simple request.

Not really, Langley said, considering that the group will consume about 500 dozen cookies in a single week, not to mention the cakes, pies and other desserts that have been donated by "just about everyone in town."

"This is such a great town," Langley said. "Everyone's got into the act and has been helping us out. We've gotten great help from the mayor and his staff. The Catholic church is letting the men stay in their gym while they're here. Again, it just shows His hand in all of this."

Carpenters for Christ may be a little misleading at times to someone just encountering the term, Don White, an Illinois native said.

"We've got just about everyone involved," White said. "There's an accountant down here — he sits behind a desk all year and now he's out here swinging a hammer with the best of them."

White, who helps build pre-fabricated housing units, said that working on these kinds of projects "is just like an old fashioned barn raising."

A typical day for these volunteers begins at 5 a.m. with work actually starting at 6 a.m., Langley said. At 8 a.m. he said, they will have breakfast and a short devotional and lunch at 1 p.m.

Following a short rest period, the volunteers head back to work and don't stop until 8 p.m.

The benefits are both tangible and intangible, Langley and White said.

The tangible benefits are that "a church our size couldn't do this without help."

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The First Baptist Church of Broussard is getting a new educational building thanks to the help of about 90 volunteers from 14 states.
kind of project without this kind of help.” The educational building will house church classes for all ages as well as offices, he said, for a cost of about $500,000.

“Why do we do it,” White said. “I don’t know if other people would understand.

“We do it to bring the Lord’s blessings back to us to our homes. We are working for Him when we do this. It’s a pleasure to do this kind of work for the Lord.”

Langley and the church members even had a chance to treat their out-of-town guests to a south Louisiana crawfish boil, which met with favorable comments from the guests.

“The crawdads were good,” White said. “That’s what we call them up north, I guess it’s OK to call them that down here, isn’t it.

“Anyway, they were great.”

Broussard, Langley said, “is getting to watch a miracle take place. The Lord’s work is being done here and though some folks may call it luck that everything fell into place for us, I think you have to give the Lord the credit.”