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John Allen Chalk: Personal Correspondence

John Allen Chalk

6-20-1959

From: George S. Benson

George S. Benson

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Harding College
Searcy, Arkansas

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
TELEPHONE 984

June 20, 1959

Mr. John Allen Chalk
2001 Davidson Avenue
Dayton 4, Ohio

Dear Brother Chalk:

A few days ago I received an unusual letter from a former Harding student who has been several years in the Armed Forces and is now at the Naval Air base at Oceana, Virginia. Following is a summary of his letter:

"Dr. Benson, as you know, I go to church on Sundays wherever I happen to be. For the past two years I have been here at Oceana, Virginia. There are about 60 members of the church of our Lord at this place. 90% of these are navy personnel. At the present time I happen to be the only one with officer rank.

"We are meeting in the city fire station as we have done since this congregation was started. There are no classrooms available. The assembly room is inadequate, and we are compelled to listen to every fire alarm.

"Since this is an important naval base there will be military personnel here for the foreseeable future. Among this military personnel there will no doubt be as many or more members of the church of the Lord as there are at the present time. Consequently, our group has been giving a lot of thought to what we can do to improve conditions.

"We have already bought three lots up on Main Street at a cost of \$5,000 and we have paid these out except for \$1,000 due on July 1, 1959, which payment we are able to meet.

"We have already purchased a building from the government and have dismantled it to move here. It has strong arches and in fact, was an old chapel but we must re-erect it. We must get in heat, lighting and furniture.

"We are all contributing as much as we can but we know we can't handle this project alone. If we can get \$10,000 in outside help we

will pitch in and do all the work we can in re-constructing the building and we will give all we can and we will get a building that will provide much better for the needs of the church here and which will offer some permanence and which will be in a much better location.

"There are 3 naval bases in the area and several other military installations. Therefore, you will understand that the need for a church building here is extremely great. It is my feeling that the home congregations from which the military personnel have come will feel an interest in helping us have a better place to worship here and an opportunity to do some good in the community. We are all completely inexperienced however, in raising money. Could you or the college church give us advice and aid?"

When this letter was presented to the elders of the college church in Searcy they immediately decided to do something. They appropriated \$150 and appointed a committee consisting of brethren W. K. Summitt, A. S. Croom, and myself, and requested that we undertake to raise the necessary \$10,000.

Our committee discussed the matter and decided that I should write a letter and address it to 1,000 preachers and ask each one to give or raise a minimum of \$10 for this purpose. It is hoped some will give much more than \$10.00.

I am including you, Brother Chalk, as one of the 1,000 preachers and asking if you will send a minimum of \$10. Either give the \$10 personally, or get a few individuals in your congregation to help you make up the amount. Ten men giving \$1.00 each would make up the amount. We hope you will do this immediately so we can get the whole of this money to the brethren there within the next 30 days.

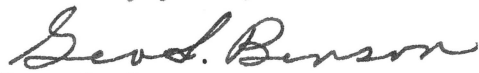
We all owe something to these fine young men who are drawn into the armed forces without their approval, and whose spiritual welfare we are interested in preserving.

The effort these men are making is a challenge. Not only are they working and giving, but they are willing to borrow all they can. They believe that \$10,000 of outside money will put the whole project within their reach.

I am enclosing a self-addressed and ready-stamped envelope for your convenience. Brother W. K. Summitt, one of the Searcy deacons, will see that 100 cents of every dollar contributed actually reaches Oceana, Virginia.

I am counting on your help.

Sincerely yours,



Geo. S. Benson
Chairman