

I Am Encouraged!

by Robert Hatfield

Throughout the years, Bible students have categorized church works in three ways: evangelism, benevolence, and edification. To edify is to build, to establish, or to uplift. Paul said that Christians “edify one another” (1 The. 5:11). The things we say ought to edify other people (Eph. 4:29). The Hebrews writer says that Christians ought to “provoke one another unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24). That statement is immediately followed by the charge to attend faithfully the assemblies (10:25).

Christians often overlook the value of edification, or encouragement, because it does not seem as important as other dimensions of church work (like teaching the lost or helping the poor). But the need for encouragement manifests itself when Christians stagnate and burn out because they feel as if their labors go unnoticed. Brethren, I am encouraged today! It is great to be a member of the Lord’s church! It is great to carry out the work of the church with the congregation of God’s people at East Hill!

I am encouraged by our elders. Our three faithful shepherds at East Hill are committed to the Bible (I’m afraid this is becoming increasingly rare in many congregations). They are men of vision, who seek to do the most good possible in both local and global settings. Members rarely see all of the daily work behind the scenes. It is not uncommon to see our elders’ vehicles in the parking lot on any given day, indicating that these men are meeting together to prayerfully discuss the affairs of the church here. *It is encouraging!*

I am encouraged by our deacons. East Hill is blessed by 13 hard-working deacons! Too often churches are filled with deacons who serve more as position-holders than working leaders. Rarely a day goes by but what several of our deacons are spotted at the church building. They are restructuring and renewing programs in which we have worked for many decades. They are improving the building to make it more energy-efficient to both update our equipment and save us money. They are calling and visiting members who cannot attend worship services or who choose not to attend worship services to let these individuals know that we care about them. *It is encouraging!*

I am encouraged by our members in action. Many of you are stepping out of your comfort zones to fill new positions and work in new areas — positions and areas in which you have never been previously involved. Some folks are teaching for the first time while others are becoming more active in great works like the visitation program. Still others have worked tirelessly to clean the building each week, all the while fulfilling their duties at work and at home. Many have commented that their perspectives have changed from a physical focus to a more spiritual focus. *That is encouraging!*

Great things happen when we work together. The work of the church is not all about the elders, the deacons, or the preachers. The work of the church is entirely dependent upon the combined efforts of each Christian. When that happens, we are encouraged to keep on working!

Thank you for the encouragement!

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