

Dodgy Builders

A few years ago, my disabled wife and I moved into a small bungalow. Unfortunately, my wife's front door access proved to be very difficult. As her disability worsened, it became increasingly necessary to arrange for a structure to be added compatible with my wife's needs.

There was no porch to the bungalow, which meant access was by a couple of steps leading to the front door. The block paving at the front of the bungalow is on a slope which entailed the need to build a substantial concrete ramp extending along the front of the bungalow leveling out and wide enough and long enough to erect a porch suitable for wheelchair access.

Choosing a builder is not an easy process and after consulting the various options decided to use a local builder. Two of the overriding reasons for this particular builder's choice were the project's affordability and the fact that he was on the local council's list of builders recommended for disability building work.

The talents of this builder knew no bounds. Not only did he erect the porch, but included in our needs were a modification of the bathroom, removing the bath, installing a wheel-in shower, and rearranging the sink and toilet.

During the bathroom modification, I did have to point out to him that the flush on the toilet should not really be flushing hot water, which he kindly rectified after digging up the bathroom floor again.

When the builder completed building the porch, the final task was to tile the floor. So now I had a builder, plumber, and added skill of tiler all in one. The electrical side he left to a qualified electrician. However, he did mention that he was in the process of being assessed to carry out electrical work. Credit where it is due, the tiled porch floor was most acceptable and neatly finished.

We move on a few years, and by now, the floor tiles in the porch began to crack, requiring attention from another tiler. After scratching his head, the tiler removed the cracked tiles only to find rotten wood to a depth of one and a half centimetres, which covered the whole floor area. Apparently, our previous tiler had covered the concrete base with six-ply plywood, which had turned into a nice dwelling place for worms and centipedes. The present tiler apologised and told me that he could not proceed with the work and that I needed to contact a damp-proof specialist.

After forking out a considerable amount of cash to have the porch damp proofed, the damp proof specialist damp proofed and sealed the area finishing the job off

with water-resistant paint. Unfortunately, the damp proof specialist proved not to be very special due to painting the sealing paint over the damp-proof material covering the concrete before it was completely dry. Two weeks later, when the tiler returned to lay a layer of concrete to the required height on which to lay the tiles, he informed me that the sealing paint, though dry on the surface, was resting on the undried damp-proof material transforming most of the surface into what can only be described as a form of play dough.

So, a second attempt at damp proofing the floor became necessary, which I am glad to say was more successful. The tiler now had a firm damp proofed base to lay his screed, and after the screed had set solid, the tiles were laid successfully. I can now wheel a wife-laden wheelchair over the tiled floor with the utmost confidence.

So why am I sharing this problem? Simply because this whole unfortunate episode is a perfect illustration of dodgy spiritual builders. There were no problems with the concrete foundation to the porch that will remain there as long as the bungalow stands. The real problem was the structure that was built on the concrete base prior to tiling the floor. The wrong materials were used, causing me and my disabled wife much inconvenience and a time of considerable isolation for my wife as the front door was the only real access to the outside world.

If I was to need a builder in the future, I would most certainly look for someone with the same calibre as the apostle Paul, metaphorically speaking. His approach to being a reliable builder is recorded in 1 Corinthians 3: 10-12: *According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones (rock solid screed) wood, hay, stubble (rotten plywood). Each one's work will become manifest...(cracked tiles).*

Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone it is vital that we use the right materials to build the local church. Looking back over nearly 60 years, 50 of those years as an elder in the same local church, I have to confess to using dodgy materials at times, especially in the early days, which produced a few cracked tiles here and there. We are allowed to make mistakes, but we are not allowed to make the same ones repeatedly – we need to learn from our misuse of the Holy Scriptures.

The change in our attempts in helping to build the local church came through discovering a manual or, in fact, manuals that assisted me in tiling a floor that did

not result in tiles cracking under the weight of wife-laden wheelchair. We already had a rock-solid foundation to lay the tiles, but used the wrong materials prior to tiling. Consulting the building instructions again (the Holy Scriptures) with the help of newly discovered outside advice (Reformed theology) the tiling of the floor was finally successful. Though not perfect, it endured and proved the test of time. Ultimately, the tiled floor will be inspected for durability by the building inspector. If approved, we, along with our fellow servants of the Lord, will receive the promised commendation: well done, thou good and faithful servants.