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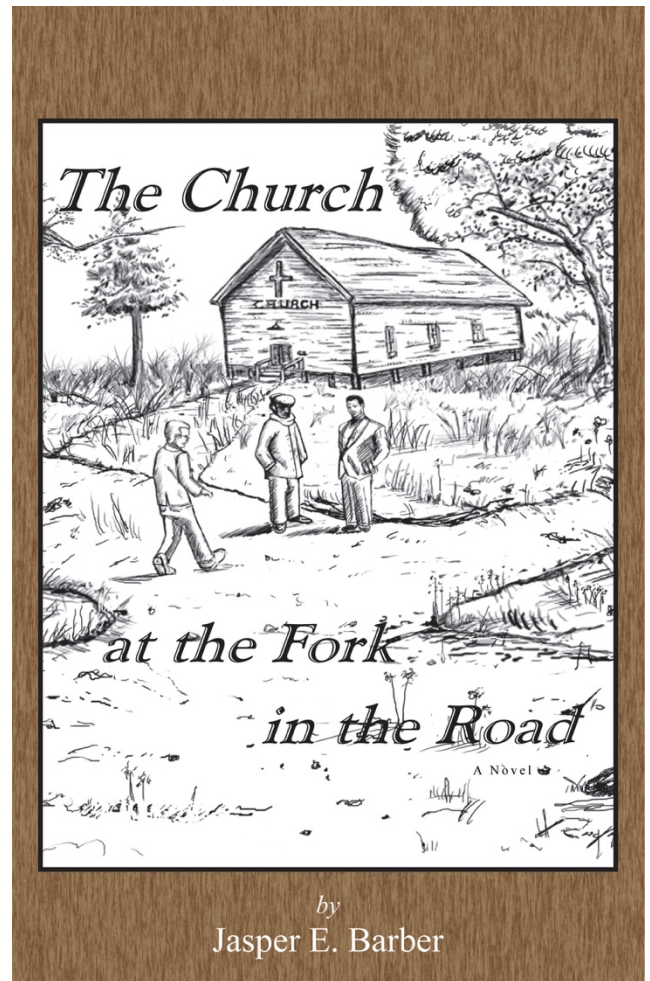
THE CHURCH AT THE FORK IN THE ROAD

A NOVEL

JASPER E. BARBER

Jack Porter never forgot the church at the fork in the road—where the entire congregation was black. When he was a boy, white folks did not associate with a church made up of black folks. Fifty years later the times have changed, and so has Jack. When the love of his life puts their engagement on indefinite hold, Jack senses a calling to return to his roots. The church in the fork of the road is still there, but empty and deteriorating. When he learns that a remnant of former members want to resurrect the old church, Jack does something he failed to do when he was growing up—he reaches across the aisle to offer his hand in fellowship.

The Church at the Fork in the Road is a heartwarming story about a retired Airman who helps an old preacher fulfill a dream to resurrect the oldest black church in the country. This book is about more than rebuilding a church; it is about rebuilding lives, relationships, bringing a community closer together, and turning worthy dreams into reality. This timely story is a must-read for every Christian who longs for healing and reconciliation across the racial divide. It will inspire you to find ways to draw nearer to Christ, and will bless you as you see biblical values come to life in people inside and outside the church.



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About the Author

JASPER E. BARBER

Jasper E. Barber left the family farm before graduating from high school and enlisted in the Air Force, retiring twenty-four years later as a senior master sergeant. He graduated magna cum

laude from East Carolina University in Greenville, NC, and then served another sixteen years with the Air Force as assistant public affairs officer for the world renowned Fourth Fighter Wing.

He accepted Christ at an early age and is an active member of the church. Now retired, he cares for his wife, who has been battling multiple sclerosis since 1991. He enjoys gardening, golfing, hiking, fishing, photography, studying the Bible, and spending time with family and friends. He and his wife Mary reside in Goldsboro, NC.

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What Others Are Saying About

The Church at the Fork in the Road

The Church at the Fork in the Road is a wonderful story of how God intended his people to live. Jay has done a masterful work weaving into a fictional story the truth of the prayer of Jesus for us to be one. As you read this story, you will find it is not about building a church building, but about building the body of Christ. This story reminds us that you cannot judge based on the outside, but what is in the hearts of each person.

Through a simple yet powerful story, Jay confirms the time-honored principle that actions speak louder than words. I can highly recommend the author as a man of God and commend Jay on the message of oneness in the Lord.

— **Barry Clanton, senior pastor at ChristWay Christian Church, Martinez, Georgia**

In his latest book, *The Church at the Fork in the Road*, Jasper Barber captures the central coastal region of North Carolina—and its people—with words, warmth, and knowledge available only to one who grew up in that special place at that special time. As one who shared that time and place, I congratulate Jay Barber on another fine piece of writing.

— **Gene Price, journalist and retired editor of the *Goldsboro (NC) News-Argus*, author of *Folks Around Here***

[*The Church at the Fork in the Road* is] a wonderful story of love and redemption, heard most clearly by God's children but spoken to everyone with the heart to see miracles and the courage to accept their part in making them happen. The author has crafted a heartwarming story that provided this old vet a beautiful reminder that only God can align all our planets!

— **R. Nicholas Carter, Major (Ret.), USAF**

In this, his second book, Jay touched the depths of my heart like a harpist plucking strings to create perfect harmonies. His main character, Jack Porter, fulfills forgotten dreams by facing his family roots and fears head on. In doing so, Jack shows us a wonderful path to racial reconciliation in the rural south. That in itself makes the book worthwhile, but more important is the clear message that God has a plan for every life. God is always working in every place, though few people ever receive fame or recognition for the things God chooses to do through

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them. This is a heartwarming story that will increase your faith in God and in his ability to use humanity in spite of our weaknesses.

— **Matt Garrett, retired president of Central Carolina Community College in Sanford, NC**

Jay Barber has crafted a story that reflects the soul of a Christian who wants to prove to himself that he is a changed man. Set free from the prejudices of his youth, Jack Porter returns to his roots determined to take that other fork in the road. In reaching out to help his black brothers rebuild the oldest church in the county, he discovers that he has robbed himself of many blessings because of his misguided way of seeing the world. This story shows the power of Christian brothers and sisters working together, not just to rebuild a church, but to build character, relationships, and a better community.

— **Jimmie Ford, retired educator and former county commissioner, Wayne County, NC**

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Jasper E. Barber, author of
The Church at the Fork in the Road
A Novel

Q: Is Jack Porter similar to you? If so, please explain.

A: In some ways, yes. The book deals with the issue of prejudice. I grew up in a home that believed and practiced that. That all changed when I learned that one cannot truly love God without loving all of God's people. And when I evaluate my life, I begin to see what I have missed because of my prejudice.

Q: So it was your faith that caused you to change?

A: It was. The most powerful force in the world is the Gospel message that Jesus Christ brought to the world. And the change that it makes is for good, not just to the individual but to all those he or she comes in contact with.

Q: What one thing would you most like for people to get from your book?

A: That God is in charge of the world, and your world will not change for the better unless God is in control of your life. There were times when I believed I was the captain of my soul, only to discover later that God was doing a work in my life.

Q: What's an example of this?

A: When I wrote my first book, *Memories of the Islands: The Life, Place, and Times of the Barber Family*, I was fulfilling a dream. It wasn't until sometime after I had written the book that I realized God wanted me to write the book so that I could see myself as God saw me. And what He saw was not good. God purged some more things out of my life and my way of thinking through that book. I believe I am a better human being because of what I learned from writing the book. I can't believe anyone got more from the book by reading it than I did from writing it.

Q: There are no crises in this book. Everything seems to be running smoothly. Is there a reason for this?

A: Instead of dwelling on conflicts, I wanted to show what God can do through ordinary people. There are no heroes or bad people in this story. While there is some distrust and lack of faith, it does not hold up the story. Conflict within a Christian environment can lead to

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disharmony, bitterness, and ill will among people, all of which are counterproductive to what Christianity is trying to achieve.

Q: What scene in the book had the greatest impact on you?

A: The scene in which Jack takes Hannah to dinner and she reveals to him what it means to her. The scene just came out of me, and I cried when I wrote it. It was the high point because I know that God was speaking to me and through me to others. I believe our world is filled with people like Hannah—people who simply want to be accepted and not be treated like they are untouchables.

Q: Is the book set where you grew up?

A: It is, but I have changed the names of places because I do not want the novel to be about a certain place. I want the reader to see that this could happen in my neck of the woods.

Q: What do you hope this book will accomplish in the lives of those who read it?

A: Change. I believe every reader will find something of value. For those who are not Christians, I pray for salvation; for those who are, I pray it will reaffirm their faith and bring them into a closer relationship with Christ.

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