

CHAPTER 17

VISION 2001:

PHASE II: THE POSITIONING PHASE

1991 marked a time in which the vision of “what could be,” moved steadily, practically toward “what is.”

The buildings “A” and “B” of Phase I had been occupied, and now was the time to begin the work of moving to fulfill the larger long range program of facilities and ministry development of its “Vision 2001.” It was the time referred to as Phase II, the Positioning Phase.

Bob Dyar stepped in to chair the Long Range Planning Committee, which was called on to address the urgent space needs brought on by tremendous growth. As one of the Sunday school teachers said, “It seemed we were always moving into buildings we had already outgrown.”

The plan was to build an 8,000+ square-foot Christian Activity Center — one with a fellowship hall, classrooms, and office space. Building “C” was to be constructed with the help of as many volunteers as possible, working alongside the professionals.

God rose up a man to lead them. Wiley Brown, a church member with his own design-build firm specializing in large, custom houses, was “hired on a fee basis — under a very tight budget” — to construct the building.

THE CALL OF WILEY BROWN

Wiley had come a long way from the young man who graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in Business Administration.

He was born in Greensboro, NC and attended both Wingate Junior College and Carolina. Before his senior year in 1969, he met and married Connie, a sociology major there. After graduation, during the Vietnam conflict, Wiley entered the Air Force and was stationed in Denver, Colorado. Following the service, he went into business as a retail jeweler, working, opening stores at various locations in North Carolina, and finally moving to Charlotte.

Though Wiley held a degree in Business Administration and was in retail merchandising, the Lord had other plans for him. In his heart, Wiley had “a strong desire” — to plan and construct homes.

“I wanted to move into a field where I could create,” he recalled. “So I just started knocking on doors.”

And knock he did. While still in the jewelry business, he persistently approached, and was repeatedly interviewed and tested by, almost every home builder in Charlotte.

There was a “special innovative builder” who caught Wiley’s imagination, and Wiley knocked on that door every month for a year until finally a position opened. When he heard they needed a construction superintendent for a new subdivision, Wiley picked up a phone and made an appointment with the president of the company for that afternoon.

Now, with no construction background, Wiley must find the words to convince the builder that he was the man for the job.

“I told him that I had a strong desire to do it; that I would work twice as hard as anyone else he employed; and that I really wanted to enter the construction field. I reminded him that I had interviewed with his company for a number of different positions the preceding year, had taken their battery of tests to measure potential and compatibility — and that all had pointed toward a strong inclination for the construction industry, and he hired me!”

His drive and competence was immediately evident. From supervisor of the subdivision he moved on to Construction Manager for the company; then, in two years, he made Project Manager; and, finally, Vice President in charge of Sales and Marketing. It followed that in the early 80s he teamed up with a designer and formed his own home-building enterprise — the design-build firm of Brown-Phelps.

In the meantime, Wiley and Connie and their three children had joined Christ Covenant Church. He had no idea of the ways God planned to use his gifts to further the vision of their new church home. When the Steering Committee made up of Bob Dyar, Walter Hendrix, and Ken Samuelson interviewed Wiley, they saw a fit right away. The committee asked him to come to work at the church as a contract employee to build the new building. Wiley admits he was, at first, reluctant. His job description called for him to negotiate and facilitate the construction process — which included working with about 200 church volunteers, but he was in business for himself, had his life charted out, and the church was now asking him to agree to a full-time — though short-term — job.

Bernie Lawrence spoke to him. “We think you would be good at this particular job,” he said. “Pray about it and see what the Lord would have you do.”

Wiley did, and in February of 1992 he made the commitment.

“So the Lord had prepared me all along to do this,” Wiley said.

BUILDING “C”

In 1992, the building was underway. Wiley employed subcontractors for certain technical portions of the process, and these were to use volunteer church members as laborers when possible. In other words, the building was to be built in tandem, professionals working with untrained volunteers. These volunteers were what Wiley called his “sweat equity.”

A sign-up sheet was posted for those willing to help. Wiley asked Barbara Guth to take the list, organize and categorize the people who had offered their help, and to plan a series of working Saturdays.

Barbara telephoned each of these businessmen, bankers, housewives, physicians, real estate brokers, retirees, mothers, and singles who had volunteered and listed their particular interest and expertise. Then she formed groups: a tile group, roof group, paint group, trim, landscaping, and clean-up groups, scheduling them accordingly. There were 20 or more persons in each work group.

Barbara would see what jobs were needed on a particular Saturday and then alert the appropriate group or groups. Volunteers brought their own tools and equipment to the site as needed.

It was a unique arrangement. As Barbara expressed it, these church members felt a sense of ownership, a commitment to the project, as they contributed their time and energy, grateful for the opportunity to physically do something for the church that had given so much to them. It was also an opportunity to meet others in the church over the three months of construction weekends. Lasting friendships were made.

The work was hard — scrubbing cement floors to be tiled, picking up construction debris, real labor. For example — the roof. Imagine putting on a roof — with excellence — in the heat of summer. It took two Saturdays to complete the job. But as the “roofers” reported, anything is possible with God.

The summer was unusually hot, so the “roof group” started early. With little or no prior experience, the volunteers received instruction from Larry West, roofer and fellow church member. In the first 15 minutes after their 6 a.m. call-time, Larry outlined the tasks and chalked out assignments. Then the work began and continued as the sun rose higher and higher.

Wiley operated the forklift, boosting shingles up along the eaves, together with ice water and Gatorade. The workers watched each other for signs of over-exertion, kept up their fluid intake, and wiped the sweat from their foreheads. Even as the sun beat down, and the workers began to droop, Wiley Brown could be heard sending up much-needed encouragements to them.

“Only 20 minutes more,” he counted down at the close of each morning.

By midday, shingles began to soften in the workers’ hands and perspiration ran into their eyes. Finally, they were forced to quit for the day.

Not only was the roof completed in two Saturday mornings — it was water tight!

“Most unusual,” Wiley recalled. “That’s the only shingle roof I’ve ever been responsible for constructing that never had a single leak! Never had to be corrected!”

It was a unique and memorable experience in the history of God’s people at Christ Covenant Church.

GOD'S OVERSIGHT

There was no job too big or too small for God's direct supervision, and there were startling instances that drove this truth home again and again.

One day, Wiley saw that his decision to go with volunteer work on the exterior boxing of the building had been overly optimistic. He admitted that he would, after all, need some professional carpenters on the job. There were cornices, angles and corners too complicated for the untrained. But what could he do? It was too late to schedule others. Such labor had to be booked well in advance, and this work needed to be done the following week.

It was on a Friday afternoon that Wiley shared this problem with his electrician who stood looking out the office window. "I think that's your regular boxing carpenter just driving into the parking lot," the electrician said.

"Come on! You're kidding!"

Wiley was in no mood for jokes. But he came to the window and looked down into the parking lot. Sure enough, there was the carpenter, the one Wiley had not seen in two months.

"I was just driving by and thought I'd look in on you," the woodworker greeted him.

Again, Wiley explained his problem. The carpenter then pulled out his calendar and found he had a 3-day window starting Monday, and they worked out a deal!

The next week presented still another obstacle. A reexamination of the scope of the indoor painting he had assigned to church volunteers brought new concerns. He would need a professional crew to paint the metal door jambs, to stain and varnish the wooden doors, and do other difficult finishing. Once again he was visiting with the electrician.

After hearing of the need, the electrician pointed, "Well, isn't that your painter, Sonny, just driving up in the parking lot?"

Wiley grinned. "You pulled that last week, but you're not going to get me again!"

But looking down, Wiley caught sight of a blue pickup truck and Sonny! Wiley was thanking the Lord when Sonny walked into the office, an answer to prayer. The building needed to be ready for school opening. But when he asked Sonny for some painters, Sonny shook his head. "We're all scheduled."

He did, however, agree to look at his time slots again; so together he and Wiley walked down to the truck.

"I don't understand this," he said as he studied the sheet. "This morning I was sure it was solid, but now I see there is a 10-day hole starting August 10."

The exact time needed! God's providence once more! The building was the smoothest project Wiley had ever managed, he recalled, finished on time and within budget.

This was the beginning of a deeper commitment to Christ Covenant for Wiley Brown. Within a few months of project completion, he joined the staff as Director of Operations. At the urging of Bernie Lawrence, the church hired Wiley to superintend this area, to oversee the many, varied, and ongoing facility enhancements that were part of keeping up with growth. Wiley would be responsible for facilities maintenance, planning, and construction.

In the meantime, Connie Brown was hired as the Associate Pastor's administrative assistant.

Phase II of Vision 2001, the Positioning Phase, was completed. The Christian Activities Center was named the Wilcox Building in honor of Christ Covenant Organizing Pastor Bob Wilcox, who died of cancer in March of 1993.

Along with the building, expanded parking had been added, and a new entrance from Fullwood Road opened. Additional sports fields were developed. Office space was renovated. There were new classrooms for Children's Sunday Bible school, and six acres with two houses fronting on Highway 51 were purchased. Both houses were immediately put to use as administrative office space for several ministries. God had provided in abundant — and surprising ways.

MINISTRIES FLOURISH

It was an exciting time as God met the challenge of phenomenal growth. The 38 adults who called Harry Reeder as pastor in 1983 had increased in number to over 1700 adults and children by 1991! And there were more to come; the population of the greater Charlotte area had grown by 27%, while the Town of Matthews had surged by 728%!

As the facilities took shape, the ministries of Christ Covenant were growing and flourishing. During 1991-1992 with Steve Fox as Director of Missions, the epicenter focus on foreign missions expanded. Seven short-term mission trips to the centers were organized. Also, effective missionaries were added to the missionary family: Mel and Charlotte Jewett to Spain; Jack and Sherrie Campbell, Spain; Roger and Dianne Smalling, Ecuador; Scott and Linda Sieben, Italy; Stephen and Karen Baldwin, Ireland; and Paul and Sarah Taylor, the Philippines.

The Home Mission Committee was created to focus on church plantings and on reaching international students in this country. David Sewing served as Coordinator for the Committee, working together with campus ministries and Mercy Ministries, Paul Joyce, Chairman.

Also at this time, a church renewal/planting ministry was undertaken by Christ Covenant at Faith Presbyterian Church in downtown Charlotte on East Seventh Street. In addition, five church planting efforts were started; among them was one in the Sandhills area of North Carolina at Southern Pines, Bill Bivens Organizing Pastor; then there was the first "flagship" church-planting in a key metropolitan area in Irvine, California, at Dana Point. This was Church On The Point with Organizing Pastor, Rev. Rick Hagler.

At Christ Covenant, leadership teams were strengthened as important ministry positions were added. Jennie DeFreitas accepted the position of Elementary Age Ministries Manager. Jennie worked along with Laura Walker and Leslie Carmichael, Coordinators for the Children's Sunday Bible school, and with Susan Rice, who served in the area of Children's Church. Susan Shepherd became the Pre-School Ministries Manager, a role dedicated to training children in spiritual growth, while encouraging social maturity and physical development.

The support staff was enlarged and reinforced with highly qualified individuals such as Connie Pratt as Administrative Assistant for Worship Ministries; Connie Brown as Executive Administrative Assistant to Associate Pastor Tom Henry; and Rita Mayes, receptionist.

Barrett Mosbacker, who had previously directed all Christian Education in the church, would now focus on his ministry as Headmaster of Covenant Day School and as Director of Christ Covenant Conferences.

AN OLYMPICS OF THE MIND

Covenant Day School was growing in size and excellence. With 326 students, there were 15 full-time and eight part-time faculty members. An eighth grade and a second fifth grade class were added. Academic programs were further strengthened by a focus on enabling the students to improve their research and study skills; enhance communication and interpersonal abilities; and develop critical thinking techniques.

With a Biblical world and life view, excellence was the hallmark of the entire academic program and the educational philosophy of the school. As Headmaster Mosbacker expressed it:

“Since the chief purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, Covenant Day is committed to leading each student into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, training the student to serve Christ in every area of life — family, church, nation, and the world. So the aim of Covenant Day is to achieve excellence throughout the entire educational program — in mathematics, science, history, geography, music, fine arts, and physical education — everything.”

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR COUNSELING

In 1991, it became evident that it was time to develop and implement a ministry plan for a Counseling Center. By this time, church counselors were seeing an average of 55 families a week and making a large number of shepherding calls. Pastor Tom Henry, educated and experienced in the field, was sharing his expertise and leadership in these ministries, working to integrate counseling and shepherding. He initiated some ministry goals, including the appointment of a study committee, responsible for developing an overall plan and pulling together a board to oversee the ministry.

The standing Counseling Committee was coordinated by Steve Halvorson and included Harvey and Beth Harrelson and trained counselor Judy Huckaby. Together they selected a team to further develop the ministry and to outline a definitive ministry structure and associated goals for counseling that would be Biblically sound and professionally competent.

Those named to the group were: David Dickson, Rod Huckaby, David Hollingshead, Tommy Belk, Ken Bodwell, Gayle Bookout, Buddy and Susan Cook, and Larry and Elaine Cothorn.

It was at this time that the services of Dr. David Russ as a professional counselor at Christ Covenant were secured.

DR. DAVID RUSS

It was indeed a unique arrangement that brought Dr. David Russ together with the Counseling Ministry at Christ Covenant in 1991. At that time he was probably the only licensed psychologist on a church staff in the PCA.

“Christ Covenant is very unusual in this,” he said. “They took a pretty good risk in developing a really substantial Counseling Center — the cutting edge, so to speak.”

As a young man in high school, David had felt a call to the ministry. So he went on to major in Bible at a Christian school, Belhaven College, in Mississippi. During the summer months, he worked as Youth Director in various churches. He was at Grace Presbyterian Church in Ocala, Florida, when he met Linda, and they were married in 1983. As God would have it, Tom Henry had been called to Grace Presbyterian the year before, and it was there that their friendship began.

After his marriage, David began his graduate studies in counseling, moving to Atlanta to attend Georgia State University. Later, when his course work was completed for his PhD degree, he began to consider a move. In the meantime, Tom had been called to Christ Covenant. Also in Charlotte was Linda’s sister, a medical doctor and a member of the church. So David phoned Tom to talk to him about his future and to inquire as to whether Charlotte would be a good place for a Christian counselor. Tom answered “yes” and immediately thought of the church’s own ministry.

When leadership saw an opportunity to strengthen Christ Covenant’s Counseling Ministry, they asked David to come talk with them. As they met together, they found a mutually agreeable arrangement: David would serve as a counselor for the church, and at the same time, conduct a private practice in his church office.

A year later, David came on staff at Christ Covenant, hired full time as Director of Pastoral Ministries. It was a big job, which included not only counseling, but also Small Groups; Shepherding; Women’s Ministries, with ministry Coordinator Judy Rodgers; Mercy to Members; and the Shepherdess Ministry, under the leadership of Miriam Jones.

Under David's leadership, the Counseling Center and ministry grew in size and reputation. At six-foot six-inches, a lock of hair tumbling down over his forehead, David greeted those seeking help with a ready smile. In time, the staff was expanded to include other called and gifted personnel: Linda McGrew, Director; two full-time counselors; and two interns. It would seem a tremendous need was met through this ministry, as evidenced by the work load which increased to as many as 350 client-hours a month in a few short years.

"We approach things from the distinctly Christian point of view," David said, "making a point to share the Gospel — and for believers, helping them back into the fellowship they are a part of. On occasion, we work with the Elders, connecting with Deacons, interfacing with other ministries, while at the same time keeping a certain amount of privacy — or often very private communication."

Yes, this was indeed a unique ministry for this — or any — church.

CHAPTER 18

NEW HORIZONS IN MINISTRY

Phase III: The Worship Center

The ambitious "Vision 2001" had made great strides. In Phase I, the multipurpose building was completed; Phase II, referred to as the Positioning Phase, included construction of the 8000-plus square foot Wilcox Building, the expanded parking, and a new entrance at Fullwood Lane.

Now the time for Phase III of the vision had come. On October 27, 1991, the congregation voted to launch "New Horizons in Ministry," which would give Christ Covenant a Worship Center. Anticipation grew as the possibilities of how such a structure might be utilized for ministry. It was an excitement that spurred on the many diligent laborers who worked to make this dream a reality.

The organization that was required to accomplish Phase III was extensive to say the least and effectively drew on the involvement of an inordinate number of congregants. This was not a feat to be pulled off by a handful of core church leaders. Rather, it was a reflection of a church body — scores of members — working together toward a common goal, to glorify God and to build up His Church.

PHASE III: COMMITTEES AND STRUCTURE

THE DESIGN COMMITTEE

The Design Committee, headed by Walter Hendrix, included Reid Castordale, Dan Pisano, Max Stallings, Wendy Burroughs, Ruth Samuelson, Ken Carrick, Phil Cohn, Danks Seel, Ken Bodwell, Jay Stewart, Tom Waters, Bernie Lawrence, John Haines, and Harry Reeder. For months, these committee members visited churches throughout the South and as far away as Texas, evaluating different types of Worship Centers, establishing criteria for the initial Worship Center design. They interviewed a number of people at each location, took photos and videos, and finally developed the appropriate criteria to meet the needs of the church. This information was presented to the Architect Selection Committee to pass along to the two architectural firms named as finalists in the selection process.

THE ARCHITECT SELECTION COMMITTEE

The process of selecting an architect had been arduous and drew on the time, energies, and expertise of staff persons, lay leaders, and members. Phil Summa served as Chairman of the Architect Selection Committee. Other members included Harold Jones, Dick Givens, Ken Samuelson, Carol Bodwell, Vicky Reeder, John White, Wiley Brown, and Ted Spangler. In the beginning, ten firms were brought for consideration and six selected for the interview process. There were several requirements: experience with the size and type of structure needed; locally based with the willingness and ability to develop a quality working relationship; and active involvement, as a firm, in church life. Only two applicants made the cut.

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

While this was going on, 10 groups, comprised of six members each (often couples), were assigned specific tasks integral to the success of Phase III.

The campaign Leadership Committee was made up of three couples: Larry and Mart Kirkman, Skip and Nancy Hulett, and Dick and Desire Osman. In the Committee's letter to the congregation, Dick Osman quoted Harry Reeder's recommendation that members give "systematically, sacrificially, and supernaturally" — the supernatural referring to a suggested 33% giving pledge above and beyond the tithe.

Serving as congregational communicators for the Leadership Committee were the Campaign Directors, many of whom had a passion for and/or expertise in their area of service.

The Ministry Visitation Directors developed a visitation organization that would call on every one of the over 800 homes of church members. The couples

leading this effort were: Jerry and Rita Maye, Doug and Sharon Smith, and Howard and Keeter Pope.

Follow-up Directors kept the program before the people and worked with new families, giving them an opportunity to participate. They were Richard and Janet Gaebe, Morgan and Colleen Smith, and David and Jane Reams.

Responsibility for communicating the vision and status of the campaign in print — whether for the media or the membership — fell to the Publicity Directors. These able laborers included David and Patti Raplee, David and Peggy Forrest, and Ray and Cass Cromer.

Campaign Secretaries who prepared materials, coordinated mailings, and assisted in communications were: Bob and Marge Long, Lyndon and Diane Kelly, and Bill and Lori Spies.

Advance Commitment Directors who coordinated the major effort of working with potential larger commitments were: Britton and Martha Harper, Harold and Miriam Jones, and Tom and Zoe Elmore.

The Prayer Emphasis Directors who enlisted and directed a 24-Hour Prayer Emphasis and a Stewardship Bible Study were: Tim and Fran Roberts, Ken and Ruth Samuelson, and John and Peg Connell.

The Celebration Event Directors determined a location suitable for a large worship service and took responsibility for making sound, video, and special music arrangements. These directors were: Rick Nelson, Ken and Sue Carrick, and Allen and Kimberlie Carrick.

The Hostess Directors were responsible for organizing hostessing for the Celebration Event, a job that included calling and inviting every family to the Celebration Event, also meeting and greeting attendees. Directors named were: John and Karen Smith, Howard and Jocelyn Estep, and Jerry and Barbara Guth.

Commitment Visitation Directors were responsible for home visitations and the receiving of commitments following the Celebration Event. These were: Mike and Susan Woodall and Ray and Teresa Gillis.

ARCHITECT PRESENTED AT FIRESIDE CHATS

From the researched design criteria, the architect was selected, and on January 26, 1992, the congregation got its first glimpse of the preliminary design of the new Worship Center. They also had the opportunity to meet Graham Adams, principal of The Adams Group Architects.

During the weeks that followed, eight Fireside Chats were held in the Fireside Room of the Wilcox Building. The purpose of these informal meetings was to introduce the architect, present detailed information, give a close up view of the model and plans for the Worship Center, and provide an opportunity for questions and suggestions. A progressive site model was encased for viewing and included the current property layout with finished Worship Center, Family

Life Center, Fellowship Building, Administration Building, and additional education buildings. Deacons and Finance Committee members Ken Samuelson, Brad Shelby, and John Sherrill presented financial information.

COMMUNICATING THE VISION

During the month of January, Pastor Harry gave a series of sermons entitled "Vision 2001: Christ Covenant – a Resource Church," in which he presented the following: Our Paradigm — Who we are; Our Principles; Our Purpose; Our Philosophy; and Our Plan.

Communications initiated from the Capital Stewardship Program kept information flowing to the congregation. News was sent out in the form of Horizons bulletins, which featured a question and answer section. In one of those publications, a commonly asked question was addressed. The question was, "Exactly how much money are we trying to raise in this program?" The answer was:

"We are not asking for one-time cash offerings during the campaign. Our goals fall into three categories: Challenge Goal of \$3 million; Celebration Goal of \$3.5 million; Victory Goal of \$4 million. Our prayer is that our church will reach its full potential in what is committed."

THE CELEBRATION EVENT

In the spring, the invitation was issued! For the first time in years, the entire congregation would be together in one worship service. Every Christ Covenant family received an invitation to the special Celebration Worship Service. It read:

The Vision 2001 Leadership Committee, on behalf of the Christ
Covenant Session, cordially invites you to a Celebration of Worship

Sunday, April 5, 1992

Ovens Auditorium

2700 East Independence Blvd.

Charlotte, NC

10:00 a.m. Fellowship and Refreshments

11:00 a.m. Worship Service

On that morning, the congregation gathered in the large auditorium, but where was Pastor Harry Reeder? He was nowhere to be found. Then at the last possible minute, Harry arrived to conduct the service. Following a conference he had conducted at the Cove in Asheville, Harry had caught the last plane out ahead of a fast approaching storm front! Once in Charlotte, he was escorted directly to Ovens, arriving just as the prelude began.

God's hand was evident in the teamwork that made the event possible, as well as in the sweet time of fellowship and worship as the entire church gathered together in one place — at one time, and He continued to lead the way to the next steps of this huge undertaking: the building of a Servant/Resource church.

Consecration Sunday was held April 26. Plans for the Worship Center were complete and the stewardship campaign in motion. Each family in the church was contacted as visitation teams went out to discuss the vision and the commitments that would make it possible.

In mid-summer, an informal groundbreaking ceremony was held as the wooded area was cleared and site preparation began.

THE EBENEZER STONES

On October 24, 1993, Christ Covenant's congregation raised an "Ebenezer" at the construction site of the new Worship Center. After the last hymn was sung that Sunday, church members and families left the worship service in the multi-purpose building and walked out to a pile of loose river stones that had been especially selected for this purpose.

Together, each family chose a stone — one smooth enough to write one and large enough to accommodate all their names. The names were penned on the stone, some including a Scripture reference as well. Then, with reverence and thankfulness, each family placed their stone in a designated area. The pile grew layer upon layer until everyone had taken part.

The story of the first Ebenezer, which translates, "the Lord has helped us," is found in 1 Samuel 7:12. Samuel set up the Ebenezer, a stone of help, after the defeat of the Philistines as a memorial to the aid secured from Jehovah.

Ebenezer stones were laid as a reminder of God's providence as the campus developed, acknowledging the church's dependence upon Him, and as a memorial for the purpose of teaching the children of God's faithful provision. A white picket fence was built around the stones and the memorial still stands today.

GOD'S QUIET PROVIDENCE

All went well for a while, but gradually the momentum began to slow. The campaign languished for lack of adequate finances. The Elders placed the building project on hold while they sought the Lord for wisdom and direction. This lasted for many months.

It was as though God had raised his hand to stop building. But why? What happened?

Then one morning, God's quiet leading penetrated the heart of a man named Hap Core. It was time.

“I just felt that the Lord wanted to have the campaign moving forward, wanted someone to get it started again,” Hap recalled.

So he phoned Dick Van Halsema. Hap’s questions were, “What’s being done? Can I help in some way?”

Dick suggested that they meet with Ken Samuelson and Jim Coleman, also involved in the process. They gathered at an early-morning breakfast and heard Hap’s feelings and discussed his background. Hap had served as a Sunday Bible school teacher but never in church campaigns or operations. He was a businessman, running his own company, selling his own product.

He boldly told the leadership, “You need to let the Lord have an opportunity to work this for you!”

Two weeks later, Hap found himself in front of the Session, learning more about the building situation, and in turn, sharing his faith with them. Consequently, he was appointed Chairman of the Vision 2001 Steering Committee. It was a large talented committee of Jim Coleman, Wiley Brown, Bernie Lawrence, Ken Carrick, Dale Thompson, and Mike Moore. Mike was also Chairman of the Building Committee, working with Wiley Brown, Nora Sherrill, Tom and Claudia Waters, Gary Brown, Max Stallings, Larry Schropp, and Dick Givens.

Together they took a second look at the design and felt that the building needed to be reworked.

We prayed through a lot of issues,” Hap Core recalled. “We kind of scratched our heads, wondering if we were doing the right thing. Sure enough, something would pop up, and the answer would be clear as a bell. The Lord just really opened up some doors for us in financing and in the design for more space.”

God had slowed the stewardship campaign so that the church leadership could take a second look at the design! The plans needed to be redrawn; the building turned around!

The church’s original design used the concept of “flex space.” That is, the sanctuary was only to be partially complete with the back fourth walled off for education space. Likewise, the balcony area was to be sectioned for classrooms depending upon available funds.

With a second look — and additional months of rapid church growth — it became obvious that there was not enough room designated for worship. Even the planned temporary educational space would be inadequate. Church leaders needed to think bigger as a Servant/Resource church, dedicated to expanding the Kingdom. So the new design turned the building around, accomplishing more floor space and seating in the sanctuary. Also added were more classrooms, nurseries, and toddler rooms. Best of all — the revised plan would not require demolition or remodeling in the future.

The plan was back on track. Hap Core informed the congregation, presented the facts, showing them the positive changes in the new plan. There was prayer and the people responded.

A WATERSHED TIME AND EXPERIENCE

Sunday, July 10, 1994 was “a watershed night,” recalled Elder Jim Coleman. “This date was an important point of transition and decision. The congregation gave its support.”

It was decided that Christ Covenant’s sanctuary, with balcony, would seat 2500; there would be 13 to 15 permanent classrooms in the Worship Center, and items that were on the original presentation were removed at this time to decrease cost. Items to be added “later” included additional parking, pew kneelers, a covered drop-off, a steeple, and a bride’s room. There was immediate receptivity to the changes.

In addition, the Capital Assessment Management Policy (CAMP), the financial guidelines set to supervise the church’s debt service, was explained: The mortgage debt would amount to \$4 million, 20 percent of the operating fund was for the debt. There would be a 15-year mortgage, 6.89 percent interest paid on the NationsBank loan, allowing for a 10 percent growth per year for further finances. The people were reassured that the policy would be carefully followed.

The financial support by the congregation was incredible. The goal of 43 percent funding was expected, but 48 percent was paid!

The committee members involved in this phase of the campaign were: Hap Core, Chairman, Mike Moore, Wiley Brown (Building), Bernie Lawrence (Administration), Jim Coleman and Ken Carrick (Finance).

TITHING A BUILDING FUND

It had been a time of rethinking, a pause in plans under God’s providence. No more was there a sense of fear or striving. The congregation had seen a new dream take hold; their sights were enlarged. Doubt changed to hope as the design for the Worship Center was “let out.” Church leaders had been challenged to think bigger — “to expand the Kingdom.”

Filled with thanksgiving, praise, and adoration, the leadership made a joint decision. In response to God’s goodness, they would “tithe” from the building fund to advance similar efforts being made by other PCA churches.

Their desire was to give the first 10 percent of building funds to a mission. In particular, they hoped to learn of a mission that was in need of a church building, and Pastor Reeder knew of just such a need!

One of Christ Covenant’s mission centers was in Quito, Ecuador. The central — or home — church planted there, San Marcos Presbyterian Church, had grown to include seven scattered mission churches of its own. As its leadership and influence in the area grew, the need for a larger Worship Center became immediate, and San Marcos had begun their building fund.

So it was decided that Christ Covenant would send a check for \$50,000 to San

Marcos Presbyterian Church in Quito, contributing to this purpose!

But there was still another twist in the tale. What the leadership of Christ Covenant later learned was that the people of San Marcos had gifted their original building fund to one of their small, poorer mission churches in the inner city. The city mission was, unexpectedly, given an opportunity to purchase land and build a Worship Center. So the San Marcos congregation, a larger church in a middle-class section of Quito, gave their \$25,000 (a substantial amount of money in Ecuador) to the Presbytery for the purpose of buying land and building the much-needed church — a sacrificial act of benevolence. San Marcos planned to start over on its own fund drive.

But the Lord had already moved on behalf San Marco! Only two weeks after giving away what funds they had, the congregation of San Marcos received a \$50,000 check for their Worship Center from Christ Covenant! Their \$25,000 had returned to them a two-fold measure!

With this support, and work teams sent down from Christ Covenant and other churches, a large, beautiful church was built in 1994. The San Marcos Presbyterian Church of Quito, Ecuador was constructed on a bustling, vital street corner there.

Still this was not the end of the story. It continues still today. It happened that one of the teams that went down to Quito to help build the church was from Briarwood Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Alabama. It was the same church that supported Christ Covenant in the beginning — our own “mother church.” When they heard about Christ Covenant’s tithing of the building fund for the Quito mission church, they went back home and tithed off the money they were raising for an educational building. With this capital they built a church building for still another of the seven churches of Quito.

The idea spread. Since then many churches in the States have constructed buildings for missions around the world by tithing building funds.

So God led his people at Christ Covenant to rethink their position, then to praise and glorify Him by tithing their building fund, thus leading to a succession of much-needed church buildings in the mission field.

To God be the glory.

A GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY

On the Sunday evening of July 24, 1994, as the sun set and dusk crept under the loblolly pines in the wooded area beyond the bulldozed clearing, 700 church members gathered at the site of Christ Covenant’s Worship Center. They were preceded by the church leadership, the Building Committee, and by representatives of the architectural group, general contractor, and lending institution, and by various civic leaders — all invited for the groundbreaking celebration.

Pastor Harry Reeder spoke into the microphone, explaining that the ceremony

consecrated the facility to the glory of God and committed the congregation to prayer for the safety of the many workers who would be involved in the project.

“Expanding the Kingdom has been the theme of our 10-year directive for Christ Covenant,” he said. “The Worship Center is a physical manifestation of a movement, by God’s grace, to reach our community and our world with the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Then came Wiley’s turn. As Director of Operations, Wiley told the group that “the design is consistent with our current architecture, red brick with white accents — pleasing to the eye and yet very practical.”

Director of Administration Bernie Lawrence spoke of the sanctuary featuring a raised semi-circular interior worship area with immediate seating for 1,800 worshipers and a future capacity of 2,800. “This will allow us to cut back from three morning services to two,” he said, “and it will open up the seating and parking that we have needed for two years now to accommodate our growing congregation.”

“This has been a successful and exciting master planning process,” Graham Adams of the Adams Group Architects said. “We have been exposed to a dedicated and enthusiastic group of worshippers with great plans for the future.”

As recorded in *The Matthews Record* newspaper, Graham continued, “As beautiful and functional as the building will be, the real strength of this project will be these very people who occupy and use it. It truly will become an instrument of God’s people and not merely a monument.”

Tom Hatfield, Senior Vice President of Rodgers Builders, Inc., general contractor for the project, remarked that, “The relationship that has developed between the church, the architect, and the contractor puts the foundation in place for a successful project.”

At the signal from Pastor Reeder, over 20 gold-gilded spades in the hands of pastors, Elders, Deacons, and Building Committee members broke into the red earth, and the building was underway!

“THE CORNERSTONE CELEBRATION”

Then on Sunday, October 16, 1994, a second, formal groundbreaking was held, featuring the placement of the “cornerstone.” The cornerstone referred to an engraved limestone memorial, which would be prominently placed in the foundation of the new Worship Center.

This “Cornerstone Celebration” was a service of thanksgiving and dedication that was broadened to include the membership as well as members of the wider community. Cement blocks and tape lines marked a visual, life-sized “blueprint” of the proposed building on the cleared ground, the exact location of sanctuary and rooms.

The service, held on the site, began with an invocation by Elder Harold Jones.

After a hymn, Elder Larry Kirkman read the Scripture, Ephesians 2:14-22, “the household of God, having been built...Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” Senior Pastor Reeder made the dedication, with Elder Jim Coleman offering the prayer.

As quoted from the local newspaper, Pastor Reeder said, “We are looking forward to repeating the exciting experience we had during the construction of the other buildings on site. In particular, we want to use this time as an opportunity to minister to our construction personnel. As a congregation, we are committed to daily prayer for these workers and their families — and to honor them with some special events.”

Guests invited to the celebration were introduced. They included city and county representatives, state officials, those from Rogers Builders, Inc., NationsBank, and the Adams Group Architects. The Steering Committee and Building Committee members were presented, and committees who had been working on different phases of the campaign since 1991-92 were acknowledged. Wiley Brown, Director of Operations, explained the site layout, and the cornerstone was laid.

A hymn of consecration was offered up, and Executive Pastor Tom Henry pronounced the benediction.

GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL HAND

Almost at once, God’s providential hand was seen in the construction of Christ Covenant’s Worship Center.

A basement was excavated for a boiler room. Bulldozers and backhoes groaned, removing tons of heavy clay earth. The next morning, men getting ready to move into the hollow were shocked to find that during the night seepage had begun, and the hole was full of water!

How could this be? Borings had been made previously. Shortly after, there came good news, however. The source of the seepage was discovered to be ground water, not a spring or a stream, and ground water, it was explained, was not unusual for this area.

The entire construction site lay like an enormous, shallow bowl and — with the unusually wet winter weather — water moved across the property. Maybe heavy rains would never be a problem again — but maybe they would. It was determined that a permanent solution to the problem was imperative. A drainage system would have to be installed, requiring a redesign of footings. The cost: \$50,000! A significant — and unbudgeted — sum.

Wiley Brown determined a team approach would be necessary to find a solution. The architects, soil engineers, structural engineers, and general contractor all met to discuss the problem and identify options. The meeting was held during the Thanksgiving holiday.

“I prayed that the Lord would bring a solution to it,” Wiley said. “This was a

project dedicated to Him, and I searched for wisdom, prayed for an answer that would be equitable. We wanted to preserve the project team's unity."

Two days after Thanksgiving the architect called.

"He is a man of integrity and Christian character," Wiley explained. "The architect had considered the problem, and after deliberation and prayer on his part, he told us that his firm was going to take care of the whole thing."

And true to his word, the Adams Group Architects redesigned and installed a changed system for a permanent solution to the ground water that would be moving under the structure, and all at no added expense to the church. Truly it was a time for thanksgiving!

BUILDING WITH PRAYER

The Worship Center building rose, and the scaffolding that lined the walls of brick served as a constant reminder of the enormity of the project and the bigness of God. Men walked along the apex of the roof, dwarfed against the sky on the vast roof. The danger to construction workers became very real to the people of Christ Covenant. As during previous campus building projects, faithful church members prayed at the site. Women organized worker rest breaks with coffee and doughnuts.

Weeks went by. Sign-ups at the prayer bulletin board went up week after week and sometimes dwindled. One day, a carpenter slipped and fell 8-10 feet from the building's steel structure. In God's mercy, the worker was not seriously injured.

Pastor Reeder checked the prayer sign-up sheet to see who had been on prayer duty that morning — and found it blank! No one had taken the assignment that morning!

During the following Sunday service, Pastor Reeder informed the congregation about the fall and injury. He asked people to renew their prayers to cover the men as they labored. The people responded, filling all the time-slots.

The many steps of the building construction moved on for weeks and months.

The workers themselves saw that this was no ordinary building project. When the scaffolding was finally removed inside the sanctuary, the beauty of the immense room with its design became evident. Construction Superintendent John Walsh told how the rowdy repartee of workers changed. They were hushed as they entered and moved about in awe under the high cruciform in the ceiling.

When it was deemed safe, tours of the Worship Center were offered on Sunday evenings. The congregation filed in to see the yet unfinished Worship Center, to feel the wonder, and to sing a hymn of praise. It was a common theme in word and in song that "The Lord is good," as those who came sensed that God was about doing great things as His people prayed and worked together.

TURNING PROBLEMS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

But a few weeks later, God raised another STOP sign. This time He worked through one of the contractors.

One day in the fall of 1995, the engineer who designed structural systems for the building reviewed a subordinate's figures. He found design deficiencies resulting from miscalculations. Much additional bracing would be required with a strengthening of the columns!

The structural engineer went immediately to his insurance carrier and told them of the potential problems, the danger in the construction as it stood. The carrier hired a well-respected outside firm from Greensboro to make an independent analysis of the complete structural system for every possible deficiency. Then they determined how to correct the problem — how to make the building completely safe, yet preserve the aesthetics and beauty as it stood.

In the completed study, places throughout the building were noted for further strengthening. Initial reinforcing began in the ceiling.

A platform scaffold was re-erected, 20 feet above the floor. Sections were removed from the ceiling and steel beams hoisted into place through the hole using sheer muscle power, pulling and forcing. A crane could not be brought into the nearly finished sanctuary. It took up to 12 men to hoist a single beam into place.

Steel diagonal braces with anchors were installed in the wall between the lobbies and the sanctuary, two on each side. To do this, a large footing was excavated — a 10x12-foot hole, eight feet deep with 80 yards of concrete piped in to embed and hold fast the anchors.

Columns were altered to support the extra load. Sheet rock was removed; steel plates were welded to the I-beam flanges, tripling their strength.

The holes in the walls and ceiling were then repaired, and a much stronger, safer building resulted — all with the beauty preserved and insurance covering most of the cost.

The completion and occupancy, however, was delayed over eight months due to these structural problems, but God's faithfulness in providing a better, safer place of worship was cause for rejoicing and heightened the anticipation of a congregation that had seen God intervene on their behalf time after time.

CHAPTER 19

MAKING BIGGER BETTER: AN OVERVIEW

During the time that the Worship Center was under construction, many changes took place at Christ Covenant.

A review of the period, beginning in 1992, shows the church underwent two major shifts in organization. The first of these was the reorganization of staff and leadership into ministry teams in order to provide more efficient and effective ministry. The second change was in the fiscal year, from the calendar year to an

August to July fiscal year, which leadership believed more accurately coincided with the ministry calendar of events for the church.

Then after a yearlong wait for God's direction and timing, the leadership and congregation revisited the capital stewardship emphasis of Vision 2001. As a result, there were critical design changes in the building and an overwhelming increase in capital commitments of God's people. On September 26, the congregation approved the final design and funding to proceed with the new Worship Center. As Hap Core, Vision 2001 Team Chairman said:

"The vision in Vision 2001 has taken root in God's people. The Lord's hand has directed the past year of trials and triumphs, starts and stops, and the hearts of the congregation of Christ Covenant. By God's grace, we move closer to our vision of a Servant/Resource church, and we continue to expand the Kingdom of God."

A CAMPUS COMPUTER NETWORK

Another capital expense approved during this time was one that would allow for a campus-wide computer network to enhance communications between the ministries.

Bob Dyar began what would be an electronic revolution at Christ Covenant, when he started upgrading computer hardware and software resources. There was a major push to acquire additional computers and to replace the handful of outdated systems then in use. Only two of the seven working computers were considered useable: state of the art IBM 286s!

Greg Plough and Craig Summerville, both working for Microsoft, were involved in purchasing software programs for the church. As the number of computers and program compatibility increased, there arose discussions of networking, or connecting every computer on campus via fiber optics.

As Bernie Lawrence, Director of Administration and Operations, said, "All of the information we had about everyone, all our files, everything was in those two main computers," and after the move, the office work really increased. We had to add people and add four or five more computers. So we began to look seriously at trying to network our computers, connect them together, so the staff could access and share information and use e-mail.

"This was in 1992," Bernie continued. "So we were looking at all our options — and finding them expensive — until Greg Plough called me one day." We had lunch, and Greg said that he knew what we were talking about doing. Then he surprised me by asking that we not do it — yet. That was because Microsoft was about to come out with a new working software product that was still under wraps. The new product would be inexpensive, yet superior, to what we were thinking about doing.

"I was in a hurry to proceed with things, and I didn't want to listen to Greg, but he prevailed, and we did wait. And sure enough, the next month, Microsoft released

what was called 'Work Groups for Windows,' which became a leading networking product, and Greg got us the software at a very good price."

By that time, there were eight computers in the offices located on the enclosed balcony, second floor, of the gymnasium. It was clear that the need for computers was only going to grow with the church, so Greg Plough, with staff member Susie Austin, began the "network." Dale Austin, who was a representative for a fiber optics and cable company, offered his expertise.

It was a huge project and a key move.

Bernie commented, "Networking allowed us to be able to communicate with one another and share information even though we were sitting in different office locations. It took us to a new level in our whole data processing and communication function."

The addition of e-mail impacted every area of ministry. Memos were sent through e-mail, questions addressed, meetings called, and prayer requests shared. In particular, the weekly preparation of the worship folder was simplified. Rather than "keying in" information — from the order of worship to ministry announcements — the communications staff was able to receive these through e-mail. This proved to be a more efficient and more accurate process.

"Greg and Susie made it all happen," said Bernie, "stringing cable from computer to computer, adding software. It wasn't easy."

"The most difficult part," Susie said, "was when my husband Dale and I pulled the fiber optics across the street to the white house (executive offices) underground, all the way from the C-building to the white house. We pulled it through or underneath a pipe that was already in the ground."

Christ Covenant was "wired" at last. Even Covenant Day School was included with eight on the network.

By 1996, there were about 50 computers throughout the church on the network, and more being added each year. That meant each staff member could "access critical information the ministries required for efficiency and effectiveness," Bernie said.

A big step forward.

CHRIST COVENANT HITS THE AIR WAVES

In April of 1993, Christ Covenant went on the air! An opportunity came to develop a radio ministry on WCNT at 1480 AM.

"This was not to be just another Christian station with music and preaching," Mike Moore, Chairman of the Radio Committee explained. "We developed a different format."

The focus was on news information and the family with variety in the programming — an upbeat format with a focus on the culture. Moore and others

envisioned news with Christian commentaries, short five-minute spots with R.C. Sproul or Charles Colson. Perhaps Pastor Harry Reeder could teach apologetics on how to defend and give proof of Christian truths, present covenant theology, and explain the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

"And there were well designed music transitions throughout the programming."

Larry Schropp was head of the newly formed committee on programming. Others on the Radio Committee — in addition to Mike and Larry — were Bob Dyar, Harry Reeder, Sam Wilson, David Reams, Vicki Reeder, Steve Marion, Jay Harder, and Tom Lamprecht, consulting general manager.

The station was located north of I-85 on Pompano, a dead-end street off of Hoskins Road. The one-story, 3900-square foot brick structure housed four to five studios, with engineering and office rooms. The building was on a grassy knoll surrounded by trees, the 11 acres of land rising to a 760-foot elevation.

Behind the station were four radio towers reaching even higher. A cluster of satellite dishes tilted skyward near one corner of the building, ready to drink in signals from space.

A creek ran through the woods, and an elderly man appeared from time to time, panning for gold in the stream. Near the parking lot was a pile of tailings from the gold mining of a hundred years ago.

"Now," *The Courier* reported, "nuggets of inspiration and information will be the gold mined from this area."

The Radio Committee realized that they needed to "start small with low risk operations, and a short term focus beneath a longer term vision of what we believe the station can be...but the immediate concern is resources — financial and manpower," they reported.

They went on the air April 9, 1993 at 9:15 a.m. as "Charlotte's News Voice" WCNV — AM 1480. The programming included CNN Headline news, news and sports from the North Carolina News Network, Traffic Patrol reports, Charlotte Knights' baseball, as well as programs featuring John Whitehead of the Rutherford Institute, the Media Monitor's Cliff Cincade, the *Freedom Report* with Oliver North, and Pastor Reeder's *Perspective*, which aired daily at 5:30 a.m. Soon to be added were the *Forbes Report*, *Family News in Focus*, and Chuck Colson's *Breakpoint*.

Ted Spangler was Station Manager and Vicki Reeder, Marketing Director. Members of the Media Ministry included Sam Wilson, Mark Bass, Steve Marion, Bob Deaver and Kris Redwing.

"The vision was implemented and as an instrument of communication has been extremely effective," the Media Ministries later reported. "But such a format requires a large capitalization fund. Given the present needs of Christ Covenant on our sanctuary and educational space, we have placed a halt on developing the program further until we raise the funds from various foundations and individuals..."

In November of 1993, a lease arrangement was being sought with a reputable Christian radio network. In God's providence, a long term lease arrangement was not viable. But, within a few years, an interested buyer, affiliated with the Disney Radio network, made an offer for the station. This offer came at just the time the congregation needed to secure funds to enlarge the Wilcox Building for the growing needs of the school and youth ministries. What had seemed a disappointment was in reality a blessing in the making.

Pastor Harry Reeder's *Perspective* Ministry continued to grow. His radio program broadcasted the teaching of God's Word daily to the Metrolina area, through WHVN-AM 1240. Also he was heard in the Bristol-Tennessee locality. WFGW/WMIT-FM, Black Mountain, broadcasted *Perspective* on Sundays. The Family Radio Network aired the program internationally a "number of times each month." Tom Lamprecht of Atlantic Coast Communications, Greenville, North Carolina, produced the program.

As a result of the program, Harry received letters, often with prayer requests. Coordinator Kris Redwing and assistant Dianne Patti found a ministry niche in this worldwide ministry of the Word. Over the years, this dedicated team reproduced the program on audiocassette, filled orders, and themselves ministered to listeners by praying over their requests. *Perspective* materials were sent out to requesting pastors and churches, shipped to missionaries around the world monthly, and as many as 500 were hand-delivered by short-term missionaries to Haiti, Kenya, and Uganda. The ministry averaged 60 tape orders weekly during the year.

RAISING UP CHILDREN AND ADULTS AS DISCIPLES

In all areas of Christian Education, Christ Covenant "continued to flex, adjust and grow to keep up with the ever-increasing needs of this dynamic congregation." Beginning in 1993, Associate Director of Christian Education and Assimilation, Chris Hodge, regularly reported on the many areas of the church involved in discipleship: Sunday Bible school; Children's Worship; Children's Choir; Patch the Pirate Club; Boys Brigade; Pioneer Girls; Vacation Bible School; Puppet Ministries; Fun in the Son Days; Communicants' Class; Pre-School Ministry; and Adult Sunday Bible school, among others.

Building disciples meant starting with relationship. That was the impetus for the Visitor Dinners hosted by Pastor Reeder and wife Cindy in 1993. These gatherings took place in the Reeder's home for the purpose of welcoming and meeting with new people to the church. Dinner guests marveled at Harry's ability to remember names. After only a short time in the pastor's home, with only brief introductions, visitors were surprised when Harry greeted them by name at church or out in the community.

Pastor Reeder's Sunday Pastor's Class was a perfect place for those dinner guests to continue new friendships and to begin building their own relationship with Jesus Christ. Graduates of Pastor Reeder's class were directed into the

Connecting Class where they could identify their unique giftedness and learn how to best serve in the body of Christ Covenant.

The challenge of discipling children was met by loving hearts, plenty of prayer — and many hands. Sandy Tutton replaced Jenny DeFreitas as the Assistant Director for Christian Education, Elementary Age Ministries. Other members of the Education Team at the time were Joe Spencer, John Connell, Susan Shepherd, Laura Walker, Cherry Nyholm, and Gatha Schleicher.

REACHING OUT TO THE SINGLES

As the church grew, the number of single persons interested in community with other singles and in church membership also increased. Christ Covenant moved to meet the unique life and ministry needs of this group and, in June 1993, added Mike Miller to its ministry team as Director of Singles and Career Ministries. Other members of the team were Dick Givens, Gary Rice, and Bruce Kellogg.

The purpose of the Singles and Career Ministries was “to reach out to the college students and singles in the Charlotte-Metrolina area and to create an environment for personal growth in their walk with Christ and with one another.”

In order to encourage small group relationships, four singles-related Congregational Communities were formed, each with their own Sunday Bible school, ministries, and social functions. These included: College; Single Impact (age 22+); Single Focus (33+); and Singles Again (Genesis). In addition, these Communities began their own Covenant Groups, or small group Bible studies. For most of these Communities there were seasonal retreats to the beach or the mountains, local and international mission trips — each opportunity encouraging fellowship, accountability, and personal spiritual growth.

An annual seminar on divorce and separation called Fresh Start was held. This offering was designed to give hope to singles in the church and the wider community as they faced a difficult life change.

REACHING OUT — AT HOME AND ABROAD

Christ Covenant’s enthusiasm for missions and outreach, both locally and globally, continued to swell. The Sunday worship folder listed missionaries sent out from the church and agencies it supported with missions dollars. Twenty-five of those appearing were local or regional works, and as many as 38 international missions were included.

Four worldwide strategic sites or Epicenters were selected: Uganda, Ecuador, Romania, and the Caribbean, with Steve Fox Director of Global Outreach at the helm. The summer short-mission trips were introduced, over 100 Christ Covenant members experienced missions firsthand, many to one of the church’s Epicenters. Those who went witnessed tremendous needs as they took up various jobs such as painting, building, repairing — even instructing lay leaders as needed. Team members Bill Powis and Dave Krausse jointly led the Foreign

Missions Ministry, under the leadership of Steve Fox.

Friends Worldwide was an outreach led by David Sewing for internationals studying at UNCC. Cultural exchange dinners were held each month with the students. Other special events were offered, on occasion, and Christ Covenant members served as hosts to these students, demonstrating Christian hospitality.

This outreach fell under the area of Home Missions, directed by Dean Draddy, as did church planting, including ethnic churches. The City of New York was also selected as a ministry focus area for short-term missions trips at “home.”

Outreach continued to be the goal of the innovative SOAR program. By this time, 650 children were participating in basketball, baseball, and soccer each year. This “League of Encouragement” won over parents and kids with its emphasis on skills, character development, teamship, and role-modeling by godly coaches interested in each of the players — and their families.

Hal Jordan devoted his energies to developing the Prison Ministry. The ministry had three focus areas. The first was participation in Project Angel Tree, which connected members of Christ Covenant with more than 100 children of prisoners to present them with Christmas gifts in the name of their incarcerated parent. A second effort was made to expand the ministry of prison visitations in order to share the Gospel, and a third ministry involved signing up members for a Prisoner Pen Pal program.

In the meantime, love was extended through the diaconal mercy ministry, Barnabas, helping many in the community in physical and financial need. Ken Bodwell headed a team of lay people who organized to visit homes and present the Gospel, to meet immediate needs as well as examine long-term material and spiritual support needs. Reportedly, 8 to 10 persons were assisted each month at this time.

ProCLAIM PARTICIPATION

The work of ProCLAIM (Pro Christian Life and Issues Ministry) was well known to the members of Christ Covenant, as a spokesperson regularly informed the church about social issues and challenged them to a Biblical response. Carson Daves headed the ministry which encouraged participation in the annual Life Chain event, the regular picketing of abortion clinics, and ongoing support for the Crisis Pregnancy Center.

Of the Life Chain initiative, Carson said, “Life Chain is a prayer proclamation by the church about truth. That truth is that abortion kills children, and Jesus heals and forgives those who have been wounded through an abortion experience.” At this time, as many as 10,000 people from the Charlotte area participated in this national show of concern. The ProCLAIM ministry is credited with “resourcing” the Charlotte area community of believers by forming a “coalition of area churches to maximize community impact.”

One October before the general elections, Pastor Reeder wrote in his message

on the worship folder: “The Lord uses this ministry to alert us to various moral and social issues. ProCLAIM challenges us to fulfill our responsibilities as Christian citizens, registering to vote and voting; and to address issues from an informed, Christian world lifeview, Biblically and ethically. According to Session policy, Christ Covenant refrains from endorsing any candidate or political party.”

TALKING ABOUT THE LORD

Lucille Ruths directed Evangelism Explosion (EE), training people to effectively share the Gospel.

David and Lucille Ruths had been a part of Evangelism Explosion from its inception in 1963, while attending Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale. Pastor Dr. James Kennedy had asked members to volunteer to be part of the very first group to be trained in presenting the Gospel. The Ruths had no idea that the invitation was from God Himself.

“We were asked the famous EE questions, and we gave the typical, very worst answers. We had gone to church all our lives and thought the way to Heaven was by quote, ‘keeping the 10 Commandments and doing good.’”

By the time the Ruths had completed the training program, they “came to know the Lord”! They also learned how to witness effectively. The training method was named Evangelism Explosion and, in time, began to be taught nationwide.

When they moved to Charlotte in 1980 and joined Christ Covenant in 1996, David and Lucille found the EE program idea was just underway. Lucille volunteered to help get it organized, encouraged church members to become trained, and started calling on people who had signed the Sunday Visitor Cards.

“It goes something like this,” Lucille said. “After getting acquainted, you say, ‘Could I ask you two questions?’

“First, have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you can say for certain if you were to die today, that you would go to heaven?”

“The answer is either ‘yes’ — ‘no’ — ‘I don’t know,’ or ‘maybe, I think so.’ So then I say, Good. I wonder if I might ask you a second question, and that is: Suppose you were to die tonight and stand before God, and He were to ask you ‘Why should I let you into my Heaven?’ What would you say?”

While answers vary somewhat, Lucille said that it usually comes down to reliance on works, faith, or faith plus works. Then, she went on to explain, “If you see that they don’t have a personal relationship with Christ, you say — ‘I have some good news for you.’” And then you go into the Gospel and share your testimony. The ‘good news’ is that Heaven is a free gift that is neither earned, nor deserved.”

During 1996, about 15 EE trainees from Christ Covenant, in teams of twos and threes, contacted about 125 homes.

EE training classes were held during the Sunday Bible school hour and continued on Tuesday evenings with visitations. David Ruths, Hal Jordan, and

Jeff Clayton were the training leaders. After the initial visit, contact was maintained, literature packets given out, and friendships established.

Lucille said she believed EE training had benefit for all Christians by empowering them to “talk to someone — whether a neighbor, or on a plane traveling, wherever you meet — about the Lord with just the basics.”

These were some of the key ministries that fell under the Global Outreach umbrella during these years. Also serving on this team were Tom Elmore, Gary Corwin, and Bob Dyar. Senior Administrative Assistant Alison Boseman, together with Administrative Assistant Marilyn King, supported the team as the field expanded and Christ Covenant’s reach extended still further.

HURRICANE ANDREW

The most devastating Category 4 hurricane in history came ashore in southeast Florida at 5:00 a.m., August 24, 1992. News came that in the area of the PCA church at Pinelands, there was heavy damage. Christ Covenant members wanted to help, so Director of Missions Steve Fox coordinated a group of 19 volunteers to go down to their aid.

Arriving at Pinelands Presbyterian Church, they found the sanctuary destroyed, a total loss. However, the rest of the church was relatively intact. So the Christ Covenant team rolled out their sleeping bags in a Sunday school classroom. A late picnic of food brought and food bought along the way was laid out for sharing, and together they set up “camp.”

“The next day,” Steve reported, “we started out, knocking on doors or wrecked walls, telling people we were there to help. Often they told us, ‘We’re okay, but see if you can help our neighbors.’ Yet they were living in windowless homes, roofs ripped away, with no electricity, and their possessions scattered all over the area or further.”

“It’s true,” team member Nancy Morris agreed, “they were almost stoical about it. Everyone thought other people were worse off than they were.”

“There were three brothers,” Glenn Morris said, “sharing what was left of their home. They told us they were doing just fine, but we could see part of their roof was gone, all their windows and a section of wall blown out. They had tried to patch it but couldn’t find any plywood, so we pulled out some plywood and a tarp we had brought from Matthews and helped them close it in.”

Later, the three men joined the team and worked alongside to help other people.

As far as the eye could see, there was debris — like a bombed-out scene from a horror movie.

“It was unbelievable,” team member Susie Austin recalled.

Nancy recalled meeting a “woman who had a tree in the middle of her house, but was more worried about an elderly couple who lived down her street.” The team helped the older residents to the doctor’s office.

It was the same everywhere!

The team, referred to as a disaster assistance team by the local paper, worked long hours. After their food ran out, they ate at the Army mess set up nearby.

Some of the men from Christ Covenant rigged up a shower at the church, so the team could clean up after their sweaty day in the blazing Florida sun. They had brought a generator along with them, and so restored light to Pinelands Church. One team member reconnected the phone line; two others repaired the church's computer; still others served as carpenters — learning on the job.

The day the Christ Covenant team left for home, Pinelands church held a celebration of faith service on the lawn.

In late October, a group of Christ Covenant youth returned to Pinelands to lend a hand, since the needs there were ongoing.

The local newspaper quoted Steve Fox: "We saw first hand what concern and the willingness to help means. We often talked of the reasons we were there and of the eternity in Christ we wanted everyone to share, and so we brought hope to them physically and spiritually."

A THIRD PARTY INFLUENCE

In his report that year, Student Ministries Director Rod Huckaby described that ministry: "As a third party influence in and on the lives of youth, Student Ministries serves as a valuable resource to parents and families to assist them in establishing the family as the primary source for building a knowledge of God's Word, Christian character, and an evangelistic outreach for the cause of Christ."

Another focus was that of equipping youth in their daily Christian walk through programs based on Biblical worship, Bible understanding, discipleship, service, and missions opportunities. This was done in Sunday Bible school, Wednesday Night Youth Groups with Junior and Senior High groups, Bible studies in Small Groups, special events and retreats, and in service and summer mission trips.

Other opportunities included Youth Choir, Winter Discipleship courses, Drama Team, and Sports Team.

The team working with Rod in Student Ministries included Ken Carrick, Frank Newell, and Marie Gathings.

CDS MIDDLE SCHOOL GOES INTERNET

An exciting development of 1993 was the installation of Internet Computer Services for the middle school students of Covenant Day School, as announced by Headmaster Barrett Mosbacher.

Once the system was fully functional, students were able to tap the vast resources of the Library of Congress, MIT, NASA, and hundreds of data-bases worldwide. They were able to track the Space Shuttle, view live satellite photos of

weather patterns, follow the paths of hurricanes, and were able to communicate via e-mail with students all over the industrialized world.

The school curriculum was supplemented with computer programs such as the IBM Writing to Read. Reading was the core of the school's academic program with particular attention given to developing reading skills in grades K-5. This reading program was phonics-based and offered in conjunction with other methods to encourage reading success. As the student progressed, literature was introduced at appropriate levels to foster a love of reading.

The mathematics program was further enhanced by both remedial and enrichment mathematics using the IBM Math Practice series in the computer lab.

As written by Barrett during those years: "Because learning is a lifelong process, the educational program at Covenant Day seeks to foster in the student a love of learning and a desire to know God more fully as He has revealed Himself in both nature and the Scriptures."

In the school year 1992-93, there were 344 students enrolled kindergarten through grade 8, with 27 faculty members. A full academic program was enriched by classes in Bible and Introduction to Philosophy, as well as four years of French, 3 years of Latin, and the computer lab for the lower grades. Music, art, and a comprehensive sports program rounded out the offerings. There were daily devotions and weekly chapel services.

IMPACTING LIVES THROUGH PASTORAL MINISTRIES

In 1993, Small Groups, or Covenant Groups as they had been called, became an integrated part of every ministry.

"Because of a desire for accountability and discipleship," David Russ, Director of Pastoral Ministries explained, "small groups were integrated into a comprehensive structure that included management by the Session, in accordance with the Presbyterian form of government."

So every Ministry team sponsored and developed its own small groups. These smaller groups gave an opportunity for members to make lasting friendships and have the closeness of a "small" church in a congregation ever growing in numbers.

With the oversight of Elder Terry Benson and Deacon Chris Madsen, the Pastoral Ministry Team was given administration of the Shepherding Ministry of Christ Covenant. This was primarily done through the Small Group Ministry where shepherding was carried out by the Elders with a focus on "making disciples." Shepherding was through direct contact with the family by the Elder and by various teaching ministries. A Contact Ministry was also implemented to insure a quarterly personal communication with each church member by an ordained or vocational leader.

Personal counseling was another growing pastoral ministry. There were now two professional staff counselors: David Russ, PhD; and Judy Huckaby, M.S. In the

fall of 1993, the Lay Counseling Ministry was instituted, and several members of the church were trained and prepared to serve. An increase in the number of calls coming into the ministry made the need for assistance immediate.

The building of the Women's Ministries team was underway. The team, at this time, consisted of Judy Rodgers, Ministry Coordinator; Char Loukes, Communications Coordinator; Betty Tucker, Special Events; and Danielle Benson, One-on-One Ministry. The focus of the ministry was on the formation of small groups, together with special church-wide conferences for women.

The Mercy to Members Ministry team was headed by Deacon Dale Austin. Assisting him were Jim Swanger, Ken Buckingham, Chris Madsen, John Bay, and Mike Crowell.

Pastor Dick Tevebaugh was anything but "retired" as his responsibilities with the growing Hosannas Ministry increased along with the many of hospital visits that filled his days.

"You can't imagine what it is like," one church member said, "to be waiting for surgery at six in the morning — the doctor was just in, and the nurse preparing a shot. You're feeling the tension, and in walks Dick. He nods to the nurse, walks up and takes your hand in a firm, warm clasp, and leads you in prayer and reads a line or two of encouraging Scripture. All the apprehensive thoughts just seem to fade away. What a blessing!"

Yes, no matter what time of day, early or late, Dick was there. He was developing this Visitation Ministry, and the Seniors of the church were benefiting from his ministry as well. This active group often hit the road together, traveling to Lake Lure, Chimney Rock, or Bryson City. There were prayer retreats at Bonclarken in Flat Rock, NC, and train tours. And on campus, there were luncheons and fellowship dinners.

While Dick encouraged good times together, he also stressed the importance of participating in ministry. Seniors were found giving of themselves through service in Children's Ministries, the choir, Pre-School Ministries, worship folder preparation, and in crisis assistance.

THE SHEPHERDESS MINISTRY

Another one of the Pastoral Ministries was the Shepherdess Ministry under the leadership of Miriam Jones. This was a new ministry area that grew out of needs expressed by many young women in the church.

In 1990, Connie Brown had attended a woman's (WIC) retreat. In the lectures and the small groups that were formed for discussions there, she saw the hurts and frustrations of the young mothers. She felt that there was a "need for a kind of ministry that would come alongside women for counseling and help."

She spoke to Associate Pastor Tom Henry, her "point person" for Women in the Church," and the Shepherdess ministry began to take shape. In order to identify women with the gifts of counseling and empathy that were needed, they enlisted

the help of Counselor Judy Huckaby and, later, Sally Smith, who had had previous experience along this line and with WIC.

Thirty-five women from the congregation were interviewed and selected as possible candidates for the ministry. Then, with the approval of the church leadership, and with Sally Smith as Coordinator, the Shepherdess Ministry was formed. (When the suggestion came that they be called a "Deaconess ministry," it was felt that often people thought of a Deaconess as being ordained. So to be clear about it, "shepherdess" was the designation given them.)

Meeting on a Saturday, 25 women came to the first "shepherdess" training session. Of those, 12 decided to complete the training. A paper was composed explaining the ministry. Judy, Sally, and Connie Miller led this first class, writing much of the material themselves.

The ministry grew rapidly, and a second training group was formed. Miriam Jones, who had been helping to organize the group, was appointed Coordinator. She used the Sunday school hour for training. Connie Miller and David Russ assisted with special presentations. Another group of women "graduated." There were soon over 25 shepherdesses available to "come alongside" women during a time of need.

"It was very successful at the start," Miriam said. "What we did as we went along, we gleaned from the woman whether she was willing to work with somebody on a short or long-term basis, whether she would identify well with a woman who had children when she didn't, or if she would prefer to be matched with a woman in circumstances similar to her own... We tried to match needs with the particular gifts of the shepherdess, and so provide care and discipleship when requested."

According to the 1992-93 Pastoral Ministries Report, the Shepherdess Ministry had grown "tremendously."

"THE YEAR OF PRAYER" THEME

"Our theme for this 1992-'93 year was 'The Year of Prayer,'" Director of Worship and Music John Haines said. Tall and slender, his eyes sparkling, John thought back over the year, "What an experience in spiritual growth! We were all challenged to greater things for the Lord in worship and in the evangelism outreach concerts."

He thought of the powerful, three-night presentation, "Life of Christ" musical, produced by the choral, drama, and instrumental ministries. "Hundreds of visitors attended, and the choir and orchestra committed themselves to praying for the scores of unsaved individuals who were present."

Then there was the Jazz Band and Contemporary Trio, both of which performed at the community-wide "Matthews Alive" festival that September.

"Taking into account the two performance times," he said. "They played and sang for thousands of people. And the Jazz Band continued to receive numerous requests for appearances — many of which involved prime evangelism

opportunities.”

Renee’ Driver was in charge of the Children’s Choirs. They presented two musicals. Directed by Jeff Gunderson, the Youth Choir led worship for several evening services and also made a successful summer choir tour.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on “The Year of Refinement.”

“We will see our energies used toward refining ourselves spiritually, musically, and technically,” John said, “as we continue to grow, adding new talent — novices and professionals.”

The Worship and Music personnel included choirs, worship Coordinators, instrumentalists, sound, and drama. Those on the overseeing committee were Jim Sutton, Connie Pratt, Tim Cool, Kathy Madsen, Dan Pisano, Sherri Smith, Craig Summerville, and Tom Van Beek.

THE COURIER

With the rapid growth in membership (for example, 66 new members joined the church in July of 1992), *The Courier* editor Bob Dyar announced that they would begin offering the publication monthly rather than quarterly. Its purpose was to inform readers and facilitate communications between the various church ministries; to publish relevant articles on ministry, also personal testimonies, upcoming events, birthdays and anniversaries, and other news items of interest to members. That first monthly edition was issued in August 1992.

Harriet Wilson soon took over duties related to *The Courier*. As a writer, she had edited several publications and was a partner in an advertising agency. She and husband Sam were members of Christ Covenant and had three daughters, Tricia, Joan, and Caroline.

Harriet put together a staff of writers and editors, asking one person from each ministry area to serve on the team. A “how to” seminar over lunch was held and guidelines distributed. Church members were urged to contribute news items, accolades, or thanks. It was a colorful, pictorial, 10-page magazine, including a packed calendar of events appearing on the back inside page.

Through the years, *The Courier* was altered with the times — from a heavy commercial, slick paper to smaller pamphlets inserted in the Sunday worship folder, and from seasonal quarterly editions to weekly, bimonthly, and monthly editions.

Stelle Snyder — who had worked to expand Harry Reeder’s radio ministry and “always” been involved in writing, in advertising and marketing — was also part of the pulling together of *The Courier* in those early years. About the time that *The Courier* went “in-house” in the mid-80s, Stelle left to work fulltime at Wingate College, but she would be pulled back into this key area in the years to come.

Editors of *The Courier* in 1991-92 were Bob Dyar, Harriet Wilson, and Stelle Snyder. In 1993, Cathy Plough joined the staff as Manager of

Publications/Communications, followed by Carl Shafer in 1996-97.

Each month, the Senior Pastor, leadership, lay leaders and members contributed articles, in an effort to make broad communications — from “thank yous,” to articles highlighting ministry areas, to reminders and announcements.

Contributing members through the years have included Thelma Kephart who often wrote missions-related pieces, homeschool mom Nancy Skipper, Gwen Petty of the Youth Ministry; and Andy Johnson, professional writer and editor.

“*The Courier* has proved its value,” Stelle said.

A NOTEWORTHY “SHORT” YEAR

1993 was only a seven-month fiscal year — a “short” year — yet a noteworthy one. Perhaps at the top of such events of significance was the renewed capital stewardship emphasis of Vision 2001 that had been put on hold in 1992. The result was a significant increase in capital commitments and congregational approval to proceed with the new Worship Center.

In 1993, the leadership also approved capital expenses for adding a computer network — the benefits of which were immediately measurable in terms of staff productivity.

And the size of this body of believers continued to expand. Christ Covenant had increased in size by 11.5% over the previous year, with 1185 communing members by year end. An average of 1217 adults attended the Sunday morning service. Through the obstacles, the influx of new faces, the expanding from without and within, and the waiting, God had shown Himself faithful, and God’s people were encouraged. It was an Ebenezer year.

As stated in the Financial Summary of the 1993 Annual Report: “The Lord has been most gracious to Christ Covenant in 1993. While He has sustained us, He has also taught us to rely upon Him more and less upon ourselves to meet our needs. For this we are grateful.”

CHAPTER 20

SEEING GOD’S PROVIDENCE

The congregation had seen God’s providence in the construction delay, but there was more to that lesson. Leadership saw firsthand the disruption caused when reconstruction was required within a building that was in full use. It was a hard

realization, but there was no question that to go back into the Worship Center in order to complete carpeting and pews and to “finish out” a balcony at a later time would mean months of displacement and confusion.

At the same time, it was already apparent that the need for parking space had not been adequately addressed. So during the pause, while the Worship Center building problems were corrected, the congregation met for a discussion on the matter.

Members agreed: now was the right time to complete the balcony and to find a solution to the traffic flow issues. Both proposals were approved at the congregational meeting. The balcony was contracted and the grading begun for a perimeter road around the campus. Then more parking was constructed.

“It was miraculous,” Wiley Brown said. “First, that the flaws were found in the engineering of the building prior to any possible damage or danger. We were within three weeks of occupying the Worship Center! Second, we saw that to build a balcony later, we would have to abandon the sanctuary for many months, then try to regroup and move back in.” Wiley shook his head in awe.

Now instead had come an opportunity to expand seating and parking. The Lord had His way once more!

Pastor Reeder referred to that congregational meeting, held Sunday, July 10, 1994, as a “signal moment in the life of the congregation,” as the members overwhelmingly voted to proceed with the building phase of the new Worship Center with educational space.

As one of the Elders said, “We will long remember the effects of this day in the life of our church.”

A week later, Harry addressed the membership on the cover of the worship folder, writing: “May I encourage each new member, or anyone who has not yet committed prayerfully or financially to Vision 2001, to ask how you can become a part of what is being erected here. You can help to aggressively retire the debt and add some key element of the Worship Center.”

Yes, the membership had rallied around.

While meeting immediate needs had, for a time, been the goal of Vision 2001, Harry saw this next phase of building as a time for looking forward as well. Even for dreaming. A “wish list” of what Harry called “essential unfunded items” was presented to the congregation. Topping the list was a church steeple, followed by items such as a covered drop-off area, kneelers, an elevator, and upgraded projection equipment. (By August 1995, both the elevator and upgraded projection equipment were operational.)

SINGING A NEW SONG

As the church continued its phenomenal growth, the ministries continued to develop. The Worship and Music Ministry’s theme for 1994 was “The Year of

Refinement,” as an abundance of talented worship and music leaders focused on raising the level of excellence in worship, presentation, accountability, and outreach.

The choirs presented a Christmas concert to about 2,500 people in three nights, and what had been called the Jeremiah Brass, became the Christ Covenant Crusaders. The group’s jazzy selections became regulars at summer concerts held at Matthews’ Stumptown Park — and were frequently featured at events at other churches.

“We’ll play for food – that’s our motto,” laughed leader Tim Cool.

In the meantime, the budding Drama Ministry at Christ Covenant presented the moving stage play, “Tilly,” under the direction of Kathy Madsen. It was so well received that it, too, was taken to other churches in North and South Carolina, “opening the eyes of people to the tragedy of abortion.”

As in the adult choir, there was continued growth in the Children’s Choirs, Youth Choir, and instrumental groups. Worship in music took many forms, including a wide variety of styles and presentations: solos, choir, orchestra presentations, instrumental performances by the Crusaders — even guitars with old-time Gospel hymns.

The 8:00 a.m. service emphasized a blend of traditional and contemporary worship styles. Brian and Ruth Howard led this earliest of the three morning services. Brian was a consultant and resource provider for worship leaders nationwide, and Ruth directed development of health fitness programs for Mecklenburg County. They came to Christ Covenant after having traveled the country, leading worship renewal workshops in a blend of traditional and contemporary music. Brian also composed church music, his best known, “Butterfly Song,” was an upbeat and energetic children’s song, which received a Gold Record on the Maranatha label, selling over 500,000 copies in 25 languages.

Now the Howards brought guitars and contemporary praise choruses to Christ Covenant.

The Worship and Music Team members for 1994 were: John Haines, Director of Worship and Music; Tim Cool, Director of Instrumental Ensembles; Elder Chris Dollar; Deacon Tom Van Beek; Sherry Smith, Marcie Harper, and Trish Wallin.

Then the news that John Haines was leaving! He was “answering God’s call” to serve at a church in his home state of Nebraska. Tim Cool was named Interim Director of Worship and Music with his wife, Lisa, assisting. Those serving in the music ministry during the interim period were: Brian and Ruth Howard, Larry and Connie Pratt, Marq and Hilda Ryan (Hilda was organist and Interim Choir Director), and Herschel and Sherri Smith.

Though the search for a Pastor of Worship and Fine Arts was conducted nationwide, the Lord had something closer in mind. Leadership was interested to learn that David German, Director of Music at Calvary Church, was a possible candidate.

DAVID GERMAN, HIS STORY

David German was brought up surrounded by music. Both his mother and father were church musicians, as well as music educators in both the public schools and Christian colleges.

After completing high school in the Chicago area, David graduated from Moody in 1975 with a diploma in Church Music. Then he attended Olivet College in Michigan to complete his BA; and later, Winthrop University for his graduate degree.

Immediately after Olivet, he answered a call to become the minister of Music at Highland Park Baptist Church in Southfield, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. Joseph Stowell, later to be named president of Moody, was the pastor there. While serving at that church, David met his future wife, Kathleen, and they were married in 1983.

In January of 1984, Calvary Church in Charlotte asked him to consider a position with them.

David began his ministry at Calvary when it was located at Sardis and Randolph roads, with Pastor Ross Rhodes in the pulpit. Within a short time, the church headed for south Charlotte, raising an impressive crown-shaped sanctuary — a city landmark — on Highway 51, just a few miles from Christ Covenant.

David was at Calvary Church until June of 1995 when a mutual friend suggested to Pastor Tom Henry that he talk to David about considering a move down the road to Christ Covenant.

Christ Covenant's search committee, chaired by Elder Sam Wilson, had been looking for a Pastor of Worship and Music for some time. Twice they were ready to "sign on" directors who, at the last minute, withdrew. At last, they felt, the Lord's man had been found. Senior Pastor Harry Reeder spoke to Ross Rhodes before approaching David about the position. The Calvary pastor graciously agreed to the arrangement.

David German's ministry at Christ Covenant began in June of 1995. On June 18, a reception was held to welcome David and Kathleen and their two boys, Dominic and Dimitri.

"We were convinced that the Lord called us here," David said, "and so we knew it was His will."

His position was Pastor of Worship and Fine Arts. When asked what it meant to him to be Pastor of Worship, he replied:

"When I was hired at my first church, the concept then was that you were hiring musicians. The idea of the term 'worship leader' wasn't really prevalent at that time. But here at Christ Covenant, all the parts of the service are considered 'worship,' so music and message was coordinated each week."

THE WORSHIP AND FINE ARTS TEAM

In the meantime the choir continued to grow.

“God graciously increased our numbers as we prepared for a larger space in our new Worship Center,” David said.

And the instrumental ministry was filling a unique niche in the church and in the community. Tim Cool, with his brilliant trumpet, had begun this program nearly 10 years previous. The highlight of 1994-'95 had been their very special outreach presentation entitled, “Gospel and All That Jazz.” Together, these musicians extended the ministry of Christ Covenant as they received invitations to serve in churches and area events throughout the year. They also served as the church orchestra, playing for Sunday services each week.

Children would not be excluded when it came to praising the Lord through music.

“The Children’s Choirs are an important element of a strong music ministry,” David said, as he acknowledged the work of Lisa Cool, Children’s Choir Coordinator, at the close of his first year at Christ Covenant. Now she stepped down to take a leave of absence to complete her graduate degree.

Stepping up to take over that role was Debbie Whetstine. In all, there were five Children’s Choirs, ages ranging from pre-school to fifth grade. The purpose of these choirs was to use music to teach the truths of God’s Word and to provide quality instruction in the areas of singing technique and the fundamentals of music theory.

The Worship and Fine Arts team members were: David German, Pastor of Worship and Fine Arts; Tim Cool, Director of Instrumental Music; Elder Rob Veerman; Deacon Tom Van Beek; Sherri Smith, Pianist; Hilda Ryan, Organist; Connie Pratt, Administrative Assistant; Gwen Petty, Administrative Assistant; Debbie Whetstine, Children’s Choir Coordinator.

“Worship is to be the highest priority of every believer,” David wrote in his first annual report for Christ Covenant that year.

CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITIES ENCOURAGE MINISTRY

The shift to Congregational Communities had proved successful in aiding members to connect with one another. It had been key to the shift to a “big church” format. In time, the Communities developed a culture that took “connecting” to the next level: caring for one another — person to person — rather than pastor to person only. As Pastor David Russ described it, there evolved a lifestyle of loving relationships.

“We have become ministers of reconciliation,” he said. “In every way we are encouraged to love one another and ‘administer’ God’s reconciliation.”

The staff focus and Sunday format shifted to help encourage strong community. For example, the Young Families Community was referred to as “Homebuilders,” to reflect the common goal of the Community. Homebuilders, like other

Communities that met for Sunday Bible school and social events, developed lasting relationships and were trained for effective, one-on-one ministry.

This led to other ministries — many practical — designed to care for people in their particular situation or life season. Through the Communities, members could identify and meet the needs of those in crisis or organize a tea to encourage single parents. Small groups flourished as Covenant groups, Bible studies, even hobby groups. Each member of the body had opportunity to give and receive ministry.

The Seniors, or Hosannas, was also called upon to provide a myriad of volunteer duties. The duties and involvements of Pastor Dick Tevebaugh now required office space, which was provided in the White House on Covenant Church Lane, along with the office of the Senior Pastor and the Counseling Ministry.

Under the direction of Betty Tucker, the church-wide ministry to women continued to work to reach women in and out of Communities, offering relevant teaching and encouragement.

CHRIST COVENANT UPTOWN

The first church to be planted by Christ Covenant in Charlotte was Christ Covenant Uptown in the Dilworth-Elizabeth area.

On Sunday evening August 16, 1994, Tom and Ann Hawkes, church planters with Mission to North America (MNA) came to Christ Covenant and outlined future plans for Christ Covenant Uptown. This new church would target the 25-35-year-olds in the area, located near Charlotte's bustling uptown. Elder Bruce Johnson headed up a group working on the plant, with the hope that they would hold their first worship service in the Manor Theater on Providence Road on October 9.

Bob Dyar — a 10-year member of Christ Covenant, eight years an Elder, five years on staff — reported on the early work done for the start-up church: The Committee had telephoned 600 families and started with a mailing list of 25.

"Pray for the new church," he encouraged Christ Covenant members. "You can be involved without leaving home. From August 28 to September 2, we will launch another telemarketing campaign to call 20,000 homes. There are 200 people involved in this. Consider taking part. You will need to call 100 homes, which will take about four hours of your time." Thus volunteers were recruited.

Pastor Reeder then told the congregation that Tom Hawkes would plant this church, drawing on many of Christ Covenant's own music leaders and teachers. A Commissioning Service for all those involved in the plant would be held at the "home church" that September.

HISTORIC MATTHEWS CEMETERY

During 1994, Christ Covenant Church took over the management of 131 years of Matthews' heritage, the Matthews Cemetery.

The cemetery was established on October 12, 1862, when the young pastor, Rev. Joseph Calvin Forbis, of the Pleasant Hill Methodist Church died. He was laid to rest near that church beneath a towering oak tree. A white granite monument, topped by a carved wreath of flowers, marked the grave.

This 2.5 acre cemetery tract was gifted to Pleasant Hill Methodist by the Funderburk family. It was an interesting time in the history of Matthews. A town ordinance had been passed that prohibited the sale of whiskey within one mile of a church, and that left much of Matthews high and dry. A few years later, the church was mysteriously destroyed by fire and never rebuilt. Arson was suspected.

The cemetery, however, was maintained for a time. The markers carried the names of families prominent in the area. Until 1964, various individuals, church families, and organizations cared for the cemetery. In that year, the Matthews Cemetery Association was formed. Sixteen years later, the association members deeded the property to the town of Matthews.

Fred Funderburk, a descendant of the family, assisted by the various members of Christ Covenant, worked diligently to secure the cemetery for future care and development as a service to the community. After many months of planning, meetings, and presentations, the Matthews Town Council finally approved their proposal. Those contributing to this effort were Wiley Brown, Director of Operations; Jon Johnson; Bob Long; Max Stallings; and Gary Brown.

As Pastor of Administration, Bernie Lawrence announced, "All requirements to begin the ministry of the Historic Matthews Cemetery have been met. Mrs. Jackie Rice will manage the operation as Director, and Deacon Breck Bolton has been appointed Chairman of the Cemetery Committee."

"The response has been very positive from the community, indicating the value local residents place on the presence and upkeep of the cemetery."

Now it had come full circle as Christ Covenant took over management of the site. Besides the developed acres, the cemetery included another .75 acres that was undeveloped. Christ Covenant also owned about 1.5 adjacent acres that would be available for cemetery use in the future.

Fred Funderburk was quoted in the Charlotte Observer newspaper as saying, "I am very happy about it. It's the right thing to have happen."

Later, on May 5, 1996, the evening worship service was concluded at the Historic Matthews Cemetery with a dedication and benediction. A garden area in the burial grounds was set aside for a place of prayer and a memorial built to honor the unborn whose lives were lost to abortion — "a place to look to the Lord for both repentance and healing through prayer, as well as to remember how rapidly a nation can lose its moral bearing if believers do not function as salt and light," Pastor Reeder stated.

THE FUNDERBURK YOUTH CENTER

There were houses — once the Funderburk homes — on the church property adjoining Historic Matthews Cemetery. On March 12, 1995, the brick ranch on Covenant Church Lane that housed the Christ Covenant Youth Ministries was given a name in honor of that family that meant so much to the establishment and expansion of the church.

As Pastor Harry Reeder expressed it on that day of dedication, “We will memorialize the gracious and godly way in which Mr. and Mrs. Fred Funderburk have enhanced the ministry of Christ Covenant by setting aside the Youth facility, naming it the Funderburk Youth Center.”

And history repeated itself, for long ago there was a little church and school on this very tract of land. Now there is another church and school — though not so little — on the grounds.

The story begins with Fred’s grandfather, James B. Williamson, born in 1832. Grandfather Williamson was in the Fourth North Carolina Cavalry during the Civil War. He lived through the reconstruction years of four wars — the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I, dying in 1924 at the age of 92. He was a farmer and owned about 700 acres of land. Twice married — to his first wife and later her sister — he fathered 12 children.

In those years it was customary to provide your own school, so he built a two-room wooden schoolhouse that he called Williamson School, charged a fee, and invited the neighboring children to attend. By 1994, the school on that farm property was Covenant Day School with an enrollment of over 500 students.

Then in 1900, in his later years, Grandfather Williamson built a white frame house opposite the site of the schoolhouse. It sat along the wagon trail that ran through his farm and is today called Covenant Church Lane. Behind the house was a large barn for his horse and mules, and beyond that, the little church and its cemetery. This is the site of the Historic Matthews Cemetery, and there, 95 years later, across the road the new Worship Center towers three stories into the sky where the tall trees stood, the loblolly pine that Fred had set out years ago.

The Funderburks were a closely-knit family, and as the years passed, several houses were constructed on the property. In 1923, Fred’s parents built a one-story frame house next door to the Williamsons, and two years later, his sister and her husband, Johnnie and Marion Theiling, moved in. The Theilings added a wing to this home to accommodate mother Funderburk in her later years. After the purchase by Christ Covenant, the house was painted white, remodeled, and called the “White House” — home to the offices of the Senior Pastor and the Counseling Ministry of Christ Covenant.

When Fred’s Uncle Sam’s health began to fail, a small one-room house was built behind his sister’s home for him — more evidence of the goodwill and love shared in this family. This small residence later served as the cemetery office for Christ Covenant.

After World War II, Fred and his bride Martha moved into the Williamson house. Fred was employed at the Lance Company, but after-hours he “worked” the property. He planted fields for hay, raised cattle, and turned the horse barn into cow stalls. Their two children, David and Melissa, were brought up there with picnics under the tall oak trees.

In 1963, Fred and Martha built the ranch-style brick home in front of the old frame house, moved in, and then tore down the old one.

The barn no longer stands, but the dogwood trees that Fred dug out of the pasture and replanted in front of his new house bloomed wildly in the spring, above flaming azalea bushes. The surrounding oak trees grew mightier by the year. This is the site of the Funderburk Youth Center, and picnics were again held under the trees — full circle.

Fred and Martha agree, that though it was sad to sell the “old home place,” it was good to sell it to the church, where friends and community gather, where children’s voices are heard at a Christian school, where games are played in the fields, and picnics held under the oak trees once more.

As the dedication plaque reads: “Whereas Fred and Martha Funderburk have been godly citizens of Matthews and blessed the community and their own church and now Christ Covenant, and...whereas they have a heart for young people...So their home will be known as the Funderburk Youth Center.”

CARE – A RESOURCE TO CHURCHES

In 1995, it was the leadership of the Children’s Ministry that provided a significant “resource” for Christ Covenant, as well as many other churches.

In response to statistics showing a nationwide rise in the number of reported incidents of abuse involving children in churches, the Christ Covenant Children’s Ministry team took on the daunting task of preparing a policy that would protect children from harm and their caregivers and teachers from false accusation. “Children And Adults in a Responsible Environment” — CARE — was an apt name for the program which introduced clear guidelines for working with children on church property. Among other proactive safety measures, CARE instituted “key tags” used for identifying children. The move proved to be a source of encouragement for parents and teachers, as it heightened safety awareness with the result of a more secure environment for children.

Chris Hodge, Pastor of Christian Education/Children’s Ministries, working with Bernie Lawrence, Pastor of Administration, and their staffs, developed the CARE policy which required that all persons involved in ministries to and with children be trained and screened. In its first year, 200 volunteers moved through this process, which became a prototype for many other area churches and the PCA.

“It is our privilege to fulfill our calling as a Servant/Resource church in this way,” Chris Hodge said.

TRUE TO ITS NAME, SOAR — SOARS

By year end 1995, in his annual report as Pastor of Global Outreach, Mike Miller wrote that “by most accounts, our SOAR program is the largest sports outreach program by a local church in the United States!”

SOAR Director and team coach Hap Welty managed this “League of Encouragement” as they emphasized skill and character development over winning. During the 1994-'95 year, over 1300 youths between the ages of 5 and 14 years participated in SOAR baseball, soccer, and basketball, and 70% of the youngsters were from families outside the membership of Christ Covenant.

And what a coaching line-up! Olympian and U.S. national soccer team player Desmond Armstrong coached an under-6 soccer team. Additionally, Eagles' Soccer Team coach Brian Davidson brought innovative ideas to the game; namely, to “reduce the number of players on the field and shrink field size to allow for more contact with the ball.”

Baseball and basketball also had guidance and support from professionals. Paul Bard, catcher for such stars as pitcher Orel Hershiser, helped with baseball. Dale Layer, head basketball coach at Queens College, taught the youngsters techniques in basketball.

SOAR is an athletic program where “kids can dream big dreams at a young age, without pressure from parents and coaches,” Hap said.

GLOBAL OUTREACH, HERE AND THERE

1994 was a busy year for Global Outreach. In Foreign Missions, headed by Clarence Cedarholm and Dave Krausse, 46 missionary families received care and support. Still others were recruited, trained and developed to serve in selected worldwide sites, or epicenters, in the Caribbean, Uganda, Romania, Ecuador, and the Middle East. That year, over 150 people participated in short term missions that took them out of the United States.

In the local prison ministry, Deacon Anthony Pizutti coordinated the effort to involve Christ Covenant members in regular, ongoing ministry to prisoners in two areas. One was participation in the Angel Tree Program at Christmas, a program that allows individuals to give a Christmas gift to a child on behalf of an incarcerated parent. The other focus was on refining and expanding the Prison Visitation program, matching members with prisoners in need of encouragement, training, and discipleship.

ProCLAIM AND LIFE CHAINS

When the annual Life-Chain was organized for the Fall of 1994, Christ Covenant reserved one mile of the ten-mile long “chain.” When the day arrived, 1,000 church members stood shoulder to shoulder along the Matthews-Pineville Road (Highway 51)!

This was the largest group of members to respond to a single project at Christ Covenant. Many held up pro-life messages in demonstration of abortion. Signs read: "Abortion Kills Children"; "Adoption: The Loving Option"; "Abortion Hurts Women," and the pastors carried signs stating: "Jesus Heals and Forgives."

"We stood prayerfully, silently, and boldly," Pastor Reeder described the experience that was moving and meaningful to so many people.

Carson Daves, ProCLAIM Coordinator, said, "It's neat to have a pastor like Harry Reeder. Most churches wouldn't touch this (abortion issue) with a 10-foot pole. Harry is a trailblazer, courageous, right out on the cutting edge that revolves around the issue of life."

CAMPUS OUTREACH

An entirely new ministry that had its beginning in 1994 was that of Campus Outreach Charlotte — the COC ministry. Neal Gooch came on board as Director. In just six months, Neal and his wife Jennifer led their young team of collegiates, as they launched groups on two campuses: UNCC and UNCG. These groups focused on establishing Bible studies and, in time, discipleship relationships. COC was also busy working to establish a presence at Queens and Wingate Colleges. All in due time.

"The students have responded with great openness and interest when the Gospel was shared," it was reported, and at Christ Covenant, a College Sunday school class was now underway.

NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

Four new ministries were listed as "Highlights" in the 1994-95 Annual Report summary: the Historic Matthews Cemetery, Uptown Christ Covenant, Central Christ Covenant (an urban church plant effort), and Campus Outreach.

But there had been others as well.

Among the notable memories of 1995 were the tenth anniversary of ministry with Tom and Toni Henry; the arrival of David German and family; Chris Hodge ordained and installed as an Assistant Pastor at Christ Covenant and as a teaching Elder in the Central Carolina Presbytery; and Steve and Karen Fox called to establish an epicenter in the Caribbean.

AFTER-CHURCH TOURS

In the first week of August 1995, the final scaffolding inside the sanctuary of the new Worship Center came down. Though the building was far from finished, the area was clear enough for organized visiting. Congregational tours were conducted after the regular worship services. Following services, the congregation walked from the gymnasium, or multi-purpose auditorium, into the

rear doors of the large new building. Conversation ceased as the people gathered underneath the towering ceiling. In awe, they sang the final hymn, glorying in the acoustics that seem to transform them into a heavenly choir. Then without trying to stifle their enjoyment, faces smiled broadly as Pastor Harry pronounced the benediction. Yet there was a quiet reverence as they slowly walked from the building to Sunday dinners, thanking God for His great providence.

The Vision could now be seen taking shape!