

With Arms Open Wide

Philadelphia

CC Philly

FEEDING THE FLOCK IN PHILADELPHIA

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”

Acts 18: 9,10

story and photos by Tom Price

“The Jesus Movement had a dramatic effect on the young people of our day,” said Joe Focht, senior pastor of CC Philadelphia. He was referring to the tumultuous ’60s in Southern California. “The Beatles had introduced Eastern mysticism which led to an openness to drugs. That created an undertow, taking an entire generation with it. Then a man, with no apparent connection to that generation, began simply teaching the Bible verse by verse, and thousands of young people gave their lives to Jesus

Christ. It impacted our entire country,” he said, referring to Pastor Chuck Smith of CC Costa Mesa.

“Now 30 years later, when you examine the closeness of our last presidential election, you realize the influence of the Calvary Chapel movement. I believe the vote of godly people in Florida changed the course of the nation, due in part to strong Biblical teaching in those Calvary Chapels in places like Fort Lauderdale and Merritt Island.”

“Currently in Philadelphia we are observing another phenomena, the urban teens and rappers—the hip-hop generation. Seeing the age group ahead of them in financial and spiritual trouble, they realize that a social church is not the answer. The East Coast is ready for the same type of revival that had such an influence on our ’60s society.”

Joe was a product of the ’60s society. After a stalled athletic career, he became a casualty of the excesses of those years, fleeing into



Pastor Joe Focht after the service. Military personnel are recognized on the video screen.



Aiden Mychal Giquinto tries to grab the microphone during a baby dedication.



Theresa Carroll worships during Sunday school. Over a thousand children participate in the program.

a religious cult. He found it as oppressive as the drug culture from which he had escaped. Then he experienced the grace of Christ at a Calvary Chapel in San Diego.

As the light of solid Bible teaching dawned upon Joe and his wife, Cathy, they felt God calling them back to his East Coast home in Philadelphia. Pastor Chuck Smith laid hands upon Joe before his return. Now a generation later, CC Philadelphia is a church that seats 2,500. Its three Sunday services are packed to overflowing, and the Sunday night service allows Joe to minister in a more personal setting.



Calvary Christian Academy Band.

Feeding the Flock

While Joe looks on all of this in amazement and gives all the glory to God, he feels that he is simply called to care for the spiritual life of the people.

“I never felt I had the gift of evangelism like Mike MacIntosh, Raul Ries, or Greg Laurie,” said Joe. “I am very content to be a pastor and teacher because I saw that in the example of Chuck Smith. My heart is to simply feed the flock.”

“I want to be an equipper. I’ve watched Pastor Chuck for decades now. While he is a great businessman, he has never treated ministry as a business. He runs things to facilitate the spread of the Gospel. For example, we would love to build a conference center on the East Coast that all the Calvary Chapels could use at cost.”



Matt Stokes leads one of several worship teams.

The church also has Calvary Christian Academy, with grades from preschool to high school, where over 1,000 students are enrolled. They compete in football, girl’s field hockey, and many other sports. Their missions’ program is reaching the inner city and is also sending missionaries to Nepal. Outreach teams to that impoverished country, which include medical personnel, minister to physical as well as spiritual needs.



Pastor Joe Focht talks with Raymond and Joyce Barr

after the service. Joe remains available in the sanctuary after the Sunday teaching until speaking to all in need of prayer and counsel.



Brian Weed, left, jokes with several of the young men after service.



The sanctuary holds 2,500. They have three morning

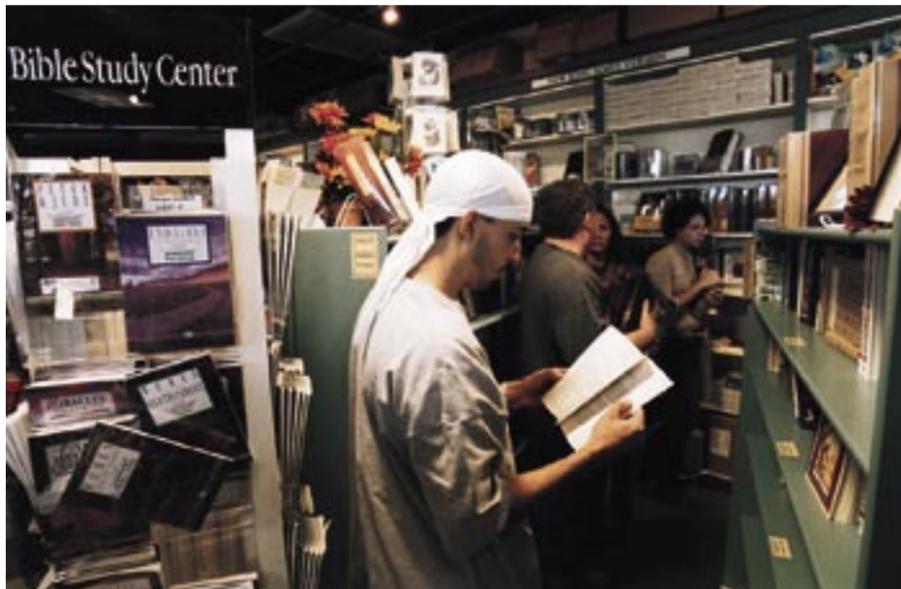
services on Sunday and one in the evening.



The building was dedicated in 1994 and has gone through several renovations.



Earl Crompton leads the children during the Sunday school program.



Tony Bruno browses the Christian reading material in the bookstore.



Pastor Gil Trusty teaches the junior high program.

When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Mark 2:17

Reaching with the Gospel

"I don't feel I have finished what I am supposed to do here. Statistically, this is the most highly populated area in the world. If you take center-city Philly and draw a 150-mile radius from it, it takes in New York, Newark, Baltimore, Atlantic City, and their suburbs. Most of these people have not been reached for Christ. That's where my heart is."

Joe believes that it is initially harder to spread the Gospel on the East Coast because of traditions and cultural influences. Sharing your faith with one person gives you a much greater opportunity to reach the entire family. A baby dedication brings grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins to church. In Philadelphia, family ties are strong in the ethnic neighborhoods.

Joe is currently meeting with 20 young men. They are working through the book, Calvary Chapel Distinctives. His goal is to pass on to the younger generation the vision by which he feels God has blessed Calvary Chapel.

Impact of September 11th

Pastor Joe joined Mike MacIntosh, Skip Heitzig, and Mike Finizio on a trip to New York on September 18, 2001. They got as close as they could to Ground Zero, where they saw first-hand the pain and suffering that New Yorkers were experiencing.

"The impact on our church was incredible," said Jerry Paradise, assistant pastor. "New York is only 90 miles away. We trained upwards of 500 people and sent them, some weekly, some daily, as missionaries to facilitate healing. We worked with various ministries and organizations like Mike Finizio's Harvest Christian Fellowship, the Billy Graham Prayer Center, Red Cross, and the Salvation Army respite centers. We also participated in giving away \$1 million worth of donated toys from Wal-Mart."

Jerry is currently facilitating a CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) course for pastors in the Mid-Atlantic region who wish to minister to the law enforcement community. He is also assisting the southeastern Pennsylvania Red Cross to establish a Chaplaincy program.

Stretch Out Your Hand

Friends Frank Gianni and Judy McMahon had given up the worldly life they had experienced in the rough and tumble '70s in Philadelphia. Both had given their lives to Christ. Twenty-five believers had come out of similar lifestyles and were meeting weekly for a Bible study. The local churches didn't fill the spiritual void they felt. They had been listening to a pastor on the radio from Southern California named Smith and wanted that type of teaching.

Rumors circulated that a Bible teacher from Chuck Smith's church was returning to his hometown of Philadelphia. "Joe brought to us what we were looking for, verse by verse teaching through the Bible," said Frank.

The first mid-week study taught by Joe was in November of 1981. Meeting in a nearby catering hall, they began in the book of Matthew. By June of 1982, they reached the Gospel of Luke and held their first Sunday service as CC Philadelphia. Judy became the first full-time staff person, serving as the conduit between the growing congregation and Joe.

Frank volunteered to set up the chairs before one of the early mid-week studies. Thus began his role as Joe's administrative assistant. He later became the second full-time staff addition. Joe maintained his vinyl repair service until the demands of the ministry made it impossible. Jerry Paradise came to the church two years after it began. His computer consulting business was doing well enough that he could donate two days a week to the ministry. He led worship and then directed the early mission trips. Soon the donated days overcame his business, and Jerry came on as assistant pastor and the fourth full-time staff member.

Pastor Jerry handles evangelism, missions, and outreach. Frank is head of administration—maintenance, security, parking, and



Sara Kostovick sells \$1 pretzels after service. Pretzel sales help fund youth programs.



Children learn about the Bible during story time.

The Comfort CD

The Comfort CD was created to provide a resource of praise music and scripture reading to nurture those who are hurting. Whether battling disease or personal sorrow, the sensitive worship music and appropriate passages of scripture minister to those who grieve.

The stories of people who had lost loved ones to disease or accidents prompted the creating of this CD. There have been many letters of thanks for the CD. One theme that recurred in each letter was how the music and scripture brought peace and joy into the lives of dying family members or friends.

The stories ranged from people struggling with dialysis to those ravaged by cancer or other life-threatening illnesses, as well as those living in war-torn countries. CC Philadelphia estimates that 35,000 copies of the CD have been distributed.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Contact Info

For ordering information, visit www.refugerecords.org or call 215-969-9742

Church contact information: www.ccphilly.org
215-969-1520



Photo by Gil Truaty

A weekend outreach in inner city Philadelphia brings an opportunity to share the Gospel and sandwiches.

ushers. He also has a heart for the prison ministry and oversees that as well.

During these years, the fellowship met in a shopping mall, occupying adjacent stores as they grew. In 1994, they moved into their present location. They have added more people on staff. There are now 9 assistant pastors who oversee a staff of 100, which includes the church's school, Calvary Christian Academy. Tom Swope runs the Sunday school program as well as sports. Gil Truaty concentrates on the junior high teens while Rob Paoletti oversees the senior high and worship ministries. Sam Pennington is the headmaster at the Academy. Jeff Black runs the counseling ministry while Tom Schmied oversees home fellowships, prayer, and hospitality. The over-50's fellowship is overseen by Jack Taylor. Steve Simpson directs the missions' program for the outreach that CC Philly has in Nepal.

"We have experienced God's voluminous blessing at CC Philly," said Jerry. "More than

once Joe and I have said that if God takes us home tonight, it has been so rewarding to be part of what He has done here."

"As a staff, there is a tremendous amount of love and friendship at the core. It's like we are all friends first, and we have this common bond called church. Joe has set this example for us. During the 18 years that I've been here, there hasn't been one fight, squabble, or division among Frank, Joe, Judy, or myself."

"Joe is very real, down to earth, and relationship-oriented. He remains available in the sanctuary after service until after speaking to all in need of prayer and counsel," said Jerry.

"We are all so thankful to have each other. We have prayed and ministered together, as well as laughed and cried together for two decades. We are knit together as a staff." ☞



Photo by Gil Truaty

Anne Golden, left, and Pat Zaborowski, provide face painting at a neighborhood outreach. This opens the opportunity to share the love of Jesus.



Joe welcomes Rob Paoletti back from an illness.



Assistant Pastor Frank Gianni.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God." Isaiah 40:3

"As a staff, there is a tremendous amount of love and friendship at the core."

Assistant Pastor Jerry Paradise



After the Sunday night service, Assistant Pastor Jerry Paradise talks with a friend as Pastor Joe prays with someone in need.