

SENDING SHEPHERDS

Calvary Chapel Vista Has a Vision for the Lost

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Vista, California



The CC Vista worship team leads the congregation during a Sunday service.



Pastor Jason Duff, a CC Vista alumnus, greets congregants after teaching a Sunday service at his former fellowship in CA. Jason was sent out from CC Vista in 2004 to plant a church in Paris, TX.



Senior Pastors Robert Nettles of CC Racine, WI, left; Lowell Nelson of CC Milwaukee, WI, center; and Tony Clark of CC Newport News, VA, right, fellowship during CC Vista's alumni week. CC Vista has sent out numerous men who have planted 28 churches in the U.S. and overseas.

Rob Salvato surveyed the faces of 30 young men and women who were listening to him intently. It was 1989, soon after communism had fallen and before the country erupted into civil war. He had just journeyed to Subotica, Yugoslavia, on a three-week trip with his church, CC Vista, CA. Days before,

the leader of the trip, Senior Pastor Brian Brodersen, had taken the rest of the small team on to Baja, Hungary. Rob, then youth pastor at CC Vista, had stayed behind in Subotica to disciple the growing group of young people who understood English well enough to hear the Gospel.

Several of them had already prayed to accept Christ as their personal Savior. During the past week, the young men and women were coming twice a day—before and after school—to hear him teach the Bible. Rob had never seen anything like it—such a hunger for God's Word and an openness to the Gospel. As he shared with them, his

heart was burning with one thought: What would happen to these new believers after his team went back to California? He and Brian both felt that the new believers in Baja and Subotica needed to be disciplined.

"This is my last day here," Rob said, his voice thick with emotion. "I have to go, but I'm



High school students meet for Bible study and worship on Sunday morning at CC Vista.

going to come back and bring a guy who will stay and continue doing the Bible studies.” Two weeks later, he returned with Mike Harris, who led the young church for several years before turning it over to a national. Within Mike’s first week, the group of 30 young men and women grew to 100. The Baja and Subotica fellowships flourished and became the first of nearly 30 church plants that have come out of CC Vista.

“The trip definitely ignited our hearts for church planting and missions,” recalled Pastor Rob, now senior pastor of CC Vista.

Sending Out Pastors

In 1991, CC Vista sent out two pastors to plant churches in the U.S.—Joey Buran to Virginia Beach and Rob to Oregon. A few years later, Pastor Brian felt the call to begin a work in England and asked Rob to return and replace him as senior pastor at CC Vista.

“When Brian left CC Vista to go to England, I think that did something in the whole Calvary Chapel movement—not just our church. A lot of pastors and leaders in our movement who had been in a comfortable



Pastor Rob Salvato

place in the U.S. started to consider whether they should go elsewhere and do something new.” He added, “I know it had an effect on the people in our church. That year, we had three different guys who went to Europe to work with Brian.”

Over the past two decades, CC Vista has been involved in 28 church plants in Oregon, Virginia, Florida, Texas, Washington,



High School Pastor Jeremy King teaches the youth about God’s character.

Wisconsin, Illinois, Colorado, Hawaii, England, Scotland, Costa Rica, Hungary, Russia, and Italy.

“The amazing thing is, we never intended to send people out. We never picked a place and said, ‘Let’s send someone there,’” Pastor Rob said. “It was just something the Lord did. He would stir the hearts of different men in the body or guys on staff, and we would pray with them.”

Discerning the Call

Rob said that he often hears the question, “How do I know if God is calling me to a ministry?” He recalled his own experience. “It started with an all-out attitude of surrender to God,” Rob said. “I put my desires and comforts on the altar, and I sought the Lord: ‘I need You to speak to me.’” And as he continued his daily Bible reading, the Lord spoke to his heart through specific verses. “I didn’t open the Bible randomly and say, ‘Wherever I turn, that will be my answer.’ I think hearing Him speak is born out of a daily devotional life.” He had prayed to the Lord, and two days later in his daily reading, God spoke to Him through the Word.

Having that clear confirmation from God’s Word is essential, Rob said, because ministry will always bring challenges, obstacles, and spiritual warfare—often in the form of discouragement. He had experienced a season of doubt about his calling to the ministry. Rob remembered, “Everything was going great, but inside I was feeling discouraged. I really started to doubt my calling. ... At the time, I didn’t realize it was spiritual warfare.” During this difficult period, Brian called Rob in Oregon just to see how he was doing. When Rob told Brian how he was feeling, Brian quickly reminded him that Rob was in a spiritual battle with an enemy who wanted to destroy the work in Oregon. “Brian also reminded me that we walk by faith and not by sight. I felt so stupid for forgetting about the battle and listening to Satan’s lies. To this day, I thank the Lord for that phone call.”

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Pastor Rob Salvato

Rob believes the Lord confirms a calling on a person’s life in several ways: First, the person “desires a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1)—doing something to share the Gospel, feed the sheep, or help the body grow. Then the Holy Spirit “bears witness”—in other words, Rob said, “You start to see the fruit of the Spirit in that person’s life.” Galatians 5:22-23 defines fruit of the Spirit as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.”

Rob added, “Jesus said in John 10 that the sheep know the voice of the shepherd. So when we notice somebody who seems to be having an impact on others, we see it as the other sheep in the congregation recognizing that person’s calling as a shepherd.” In addition, the pastoral staff is more likely to consider a man who is currently serving in some way at CC Vista. “In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul said a bishop must not be a novice so we consider first those who are already serving in some capacity at the church.” Rob referred to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, in which the faithful servant was entrusted with more. “His reward was the blessing of more responsibility,” Rob explained.

New Works

Before going out to help start a church in Milwaukee, Robert Nettles had been serving at CC Vista for several years as a deacon. “After I got saved, I just wanted to serve my Lord. They asked me to be a deacon,” Robert recalled. “The pastors taught us aspects of the role of pastoring: the importance of teaching and how to prepare sermons. Even then I didn’t sense that God was calling me to be a pastor, but they knew before I did that I would be a pastor one day.” Robert was helping Lowell Nelson lead a home fellowship in Vista when both Robert and Lowell felt a burden for Milwaukee. “When I shared it with Pastor Rob, he was really excited. There were some good things happening in our home fellowship,” recalled Robert. “He gave us his blessing on it.” Robert assisted Lowell at CC Milwaukee for



Worshippers bow their heads for prayer during a Sunday morning service.

several years before becoming pastor of CC Racine, WI, in 2004.

After serving at Vista for five years, Pastor Jason Duff remembers wrestling with God's call for him to go start a new work in Paris, TX. "I was sitting in church after a really sweet worship service, and I thought to myself, 'I don't ever want to leave this place.'" Then he remembered a verse from Mark's Gospel:

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. Mark 6:34

"I felt as if the Lord was saying that there were sheep without a shepherd in Paris, TX, and He wanted me to go feed them His Word," Jason recalled. He surrendered, and the church has grown to nearly 700 people since 2004—a large number in their small Central Texas community.

Equipping and Supporting

One practice at CC Vista that has been repeated in some of their daughter churches is that of training up young men in the various aspects of running a church. Those who intern at the church also serve weekly

in janitorial work, children's ministry, and other behind-the-scenes tasks.

"One of the great things about CC Vista is that no one has just one job—not even Pastor Rob," recalled Jason. "Each pastor has many responsibilities: I learned how to do sound, children's ministry, high school, college, counseling, and front office work."

The varied exposure was also tempered with learning how to be faithful and focused, Jason added. "I remember that I was always looking for the next thing. But Pastor Rob taught us not to see our ministries as a stepping-stone to a future ministry; rather,

we were to be committed to the work in front of us," Jason recalled. "That's helped me focus here (in Paris, TX). It would be easy to think, 'I can't wait until the church reaches 1,000 people.' Instead, I have learned to give attention to the people who are here right now."

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you.

1 Peter 5:1-2a



An outdoor bookstore and café offers believers an opportunity to fellowship.

Serving Nearby

Several local ministries have also been born in a similar fashion—as faithful members of the fellowship answered a call that God had laid on their hearts. Believers from CC Vista minister locally to Marines at Camp Pendleton, to elementary school children after school, to those in crisis pregnancies, and to those in prison or struggling with substance abuse.

Linda Barrett, who also went on the initial trip to Eastern Europe, came back to the U.S. with a new zeal to share the Gospel. "That's when I realized there was a calling on my life to tell people about the Lord," she said. "I'm really thankful God has given me an outlet for that." Having been a Sunday school teacher for years, Linda felt a burden to share the Gospel at correctional facilities.

She started by going with a small team to sit in the lobby of the Vista jail and share with whoever sat next to them. Then, in 1991, a door opened for her to share a women's Bible study at the women's jail in Las Colinas. In 1999, she was asked to become the Vista County Detention Facility's protestant chaplain, overseeing 90 women in the short-term holding facility. Recently, she was also asked to coordinate Bible studies for 170 of the men in the same system.



Children's ministry worker Shannon Horton joins the children in a song of worship to the Lord. Shannon and her husband (not pictured) have been involved in the children's ministry at CC Vista for over 14 years.

"I still do my Bible study on Mondays, and now I'm an overseer of seven other churches who go in and do services," she said. "We have six Bible studies per week for the women and just got permission to do eight per week for the men." In addition, Linda visits inmates cell-to-cell with two other female chaplains, where she brings Christian literature and Bibles.

"I feel like I'm a doctor bringing my doctor bag—my Bible. It's the antidote for all these people. They can be healed and have a new life," Linda said. "It's amazing—every day that we go in, someone gets saved, rededicates her life to the Lord, or asks for prayer. ... Sometimes an inmate will request to see me, and as I walk in, she'll say, 'I want to give my life to the Lord.'"



Pastor Rob shares a humorous moment with a CC Vista attendee.

When she talks to inmates, Linda never asks about what crime they committed. "That would put up an instant barrier," she said. "We're all sinners; these ladies are just more aware of it than most of us. They are ready to hear about God's love and forgiveness."

The verse-by-verse Bible studies have resulted in many changed lives. Several ladies who had attended her Bible studies and accepted Christ while incarcerated now attend CC Vista with their families. "Some of them are volunteering and doing Bible studies at the jail now," Linda said. "You'd think they would never want to return, but they have a heart for the women because they have been in their place." She oversees 60 volunteers for the women and is lining up nearly 70 volunteers for the men. "You need a lot of volunteers so that you can rotate and so that people don't get burned out."



Debbi Bryson of Calvary Chapel Church Planting Mission is surrounded by Jason Duff's daughters Haley and Aleah.

Fruitful Works

Another local outreach is the One Sure Way Drug and Alcohol Ministry led by Pastor Howard Andersen. The ministry currently meets on Tuesday nights and has grown to 200 people. "Pastor Howard and his team do Bible studies at the local rehabs on a weekly basis," Pastor Rob said. "It's been really fruitful; guys are getting saved and getting clean. Now, oftentimes the courts will allow the guys to come to our Tuesday night Bible study in place of going to an AA meeting or a class."

Volunteers from CC Vista also go to disaster-stricken areas to offer relief—something

that began after Hurricane Katrina. Other men who are gifted in trades go around the world to help churches with remodeling projects. Rob commented, "All of these ministries and churches were not prompted by me or anyone else at 'headquarters'—it was simply the Lord stirring the hearts of people who were receptive and obedient to step out in faith. ... And we've seen tremendous fruit." 🙌

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