

Watering Seeds of Faith

Story by Christmas M. Beeler
Photos by Geraldine Wilkins

Sharing God's Joy at Calvary Chapel Aurora, CO

Kathleen and Richard Jones' son Bryan was nearly 10 when he died of leukemia in 1998. The last few years had been an exhausting battle for the whole family with countless trips to the hospital, fluctuating periods of wellness and illness, and raising three other sons. Still mourning Bryan's loss, Kathleen wanted to return to The Children's Hospital in Aurora, near Denver, to reach out to other families. She knew many of the patients and staff members on a first-name basis. But Richard balked: Bryan's death was still too new, too painful.

Alone with God, Kathleen prayed, "Lord, I want to go, but I don't want it to be just for myself, for my healing process—I want to do whatever Your will is in this." Nearly six months after Bryan's death, while many churches were planning harvest festivals, she thought, "Why couldn't we do something like that at the hospital?"

Kathleen approached the hospital staff. Normally they did not allow groups to come in because of the great risk to immune-compromised children, but since Kathleen and Richard had firsthand experience with caring for a vulnerable child, the staff would give it a try. With three weeks to plan the carnival, she asked her church leaders for permission to invite others to minister at the hospital. Carefully sterilizing everything, believers played games with the children and gave away prizes during the four-hour festival. It was such a success that the Jones' church, CC Aurora, CO, has hosted the event at The Children's Hospital for the last 10 years and now goes twice a year.

"The hospital told us that some kids who have to be in for long-term treatment will

now specifically request to be there during our carnival" said Richard. "It's just the goodness of the Lord—He does it all."

They have watched the Lord's joy lighten the somber environment. Kathleen remembered one teenage girl who had a brain tumor and was missing part of her skull. "She had a quiet, solemn look on her face; she was very shy. She was standing there watching us set up, and the volunteers began talking to her and asked if she wanted to help. She stayed the whole day, and by the end she was smiling and talking. One of the nurses told us that the girl hadn't smiled for months."

Ministering to the Families

Richard mentioned, "When you go, you're ministering to the families as well as the children. Depending on the child's illness, families can spend days or months

in the hospital. You can get so worn out." Volunteers have ministered to hundreds of children and have prayed with countless families for comfort and healing.

"I can't even describe what the parents go through. Having a child with cancer changes your whole life," said Richard. "And it's hard for the siblings to understand why one child is getting so much attention. It takes a lot of work to get through it."

Kathleen added, "Your life is not your own; you can't plan anything. At one of Bryan's birthday parties, he started spiking a fever, so all the kids had to go home and he had to go straight to the hospital."

Respecting Parameters

The CC Aurora believers respect the hospital's rules—both for sterilization and



Maribel Gutierrez, right, of CC Aurora, gives a child a gift during the church's carnival for young, long-term cancer patients at The Children's Hospital.



Kathleen Jones shows a child his reflection after she finishes painting his face. The lad has cancer. CC Aurora has been ministering to children and their families at The Children's Hospital for more than 10 years. Kathleen and her husband, Richard, began the ministry soon after their son died of leukemia in 1998.

for sharing the Gospel. “The rule is, if the patient is 18 or over, you can ask them if they would like prayer. If they’re under 18, you must ask their parents. If they accept, then we can share the Gospel with them,” Kathleen explained. “Every time we go, the Lord always opens a door.”

Michael Grosbach, an assistant pastor who oversees children’s ministry at CC Aurora and serves at the festivals, said, “We have followed those guidelines, and the Lord has brought fruit from it. There have been people who have gotten saved.”

In Other Cities

Kathleen has helped other churches minister at their nearby hospitals. She worked with several Calvary Chapels in Vancouver, BC, who hosted events at their children’s hospital. She also assisted Horizon Christian Fellowship in San Diego, CA, in reaching their nearby Ronald McDonald House.

“I contact the hospital to see if they’re interested. After we get the ball rolling, we turn it over to the local Calvary Chapel or affiliate,” said Kathleen, who is open to helping other churches reach hurting families in their area.

Richard added, “We want to put together a manual or DVD for any church that is interested in how to approach a hospital.” That initial contact can be the deciding factor, the Joneses explained: If a hospital feels like a group does not understand vulnerable children or is not going to respect their rules, they will not allow them to come in.



A man and woman stand to receive Christ as their Savior.

Relaying God’s Comfort

CC Aurora Senior Pastor Ed Taylor said, “We’re seeing this happen repeatedly in our church: Someone in our body goes through something, and it opens their heart to a new channel of ministry—to comfort others who are going through the same thing.”

For example, the church ministers to families who have experienced a miscarriage. He explained, “One of our pastors’ wives had a miscarriage at a women’s retreat, and the women rallied around her. People often



Pastor Ed Taylor, right, dedicates a baby girl to the Lord. Ed has been senior pastor of CC Aurora for over ten years.

don’t talk about having a miscarriage, but it turned into a behind-the-scenes ministry.”

In all of their outreaches, believers at CC Aurora seek to share Christ in their community through their different gifts. “We’ve had women knit booties for the crisis pregnancy center or crochet caps for ladies who have cancer,” Ed said. “We have homeschool parents reaching out to unreached homeschool families.”

He added, “Denver is a unique, diverse city that is largely unreached. ... We are always asking ourselves, what can we do to reach the lost?” Recalling his own days before

Christ, Pastor Ed said, “We want to be a place where anyone will feel welcomed and loved.” He desires the lost to see the grace, mercy, and love of Christ that Jesus offers freely to those who follow Him.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Ephesians 4:7

Coming to Christ

Growing up near Los Angeles, Ed was 23 when he first visited CC Downey, CA. “I thought, ‘*The last thing I need is God and church,*’ but I also knew that deep down,

there was something missing.” Touched by the message, he continued to attend on Wednesday nights. On Ed’s fifth visit, Pastor Jeff Johnson encouraged anyone who wanted to accept Christ to pray, receive Him as their Savior, and turn their lives over to Him. Ed stood up to pray. He shared his new faith with his wife Marie, who accepted Christ a week later.

Over the next eight years, the couple grew in their faith through the verse-by-verse Bible teaching at CC Downey. They began to serve in different areas, wherever there was a need. By 1997, Ed was teaching and pastoring in the singles’ ministry.



The congregation worships in song before the verse-by-verse teaching of God’s Word.



Junior High Pastor Louie Cruzado teaches the youth on Sunday.



A Sunday school teacher helps a child find a verse in the Bible.

A month later, Ed was offered the job in Aurora. He was astounded, but he knew that it was God's will and God's timing. His wife Marie agreed. Ed recalled, "In my first attempt to plant a church, I thought I was going to do a great work for God. But later I felt God say that He didn't need me to do a great work for Him; He was going to do a great work through me."

Waiting and Watching God Work

Upon moving to Aurora in July of 1999, they found that a Horizon Christian Fellowship had recently been planted by Pastor Dave Love in nearby Littleton. Ed didn't want to compete with the church by starting a new

work, so he and his family attended Horizon while Ed sought the Lord. Ed began leading Horizon's home fellowship in Aurora, 17 miles from Littleton.

A few months later, Pastor Dave said that he felt that he was to focus on the Horizon in Littleton while Ed would oversee the fellowship in Aurora. So in December of 1999, Ed became senior pastor of Calvary Chapel Aurora.

The church has grown as new people come to Christ almost every week. Ed cited 2 Chronicles 29:36: "Then ... all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly." He

added, "I am blessed to be a part of it and watch what the Lord is doing here." 🙌

And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 1 Corinthians 12:6

CC Aurora, CO
www.calvaryaurora.org
info@calvaryaurora.org
 303-628-7200

One day Pastor Jeff related the church's early days, when a few families met outside in a park. Later, Ed prayed, "Lord, if You ever want to do that again, I'll be that guy—to start a Bible study under a tree." His desire grew to plant a church where there were no Calvary Chapels.

A Desire and a Disappointment

Ed felt God leading him to plant a church in Colorado. In 1998, he resigned from his job, told his church family that he was going to plant a church, and traveled with Marie to rent a house in a city in Colorado. But during that trip, Ed recalled, "God really convicted me: I realized that I didn't have a heart for people—I just wanted to plant a church." He came back confused, heartbroken, and humbled.

"Pastor Jeff was so gracious; he just welcomed me back. But it seemed like every week someone at church would ask me why I was back, and I had to explain that I wasn't planting a church in Colorado," Ed said. "Those five months were the lowest point of my Christian life. ... I even questioned my salvation."

Back at his corporate job, Ed accepted that it was God's will for him to be a witness there. That April, his boss announced his own move to a company office in Aurora, CO, promoting Ed to his boss' current position. Later that day, Ed wrestled with mixed emotions. On one hand, he was thankful for the promotion, but he also felt, "Lord, shouldn't it be me going to Colorado to plant a church?" Again, he decided to accept it as God's will.



Pastors are available to pray with believers after each service. Ed prays with a couple while prayer team member Rick Shanks, in background, holds a believer's hand as they seek the Lord together.



Wilbur Timmie, center, hugs a greeter before the service. In the background, Scott Shultz greets attendees at the welcome center.