



New Church Ministry

# Sparks

Igniting the passion to start new Disciples churches

## FCC serves as a meeting place for many congregations

Las Vegas, Nevada and all of Southeast Nevada have been among the fastest growing communities in the United States since the 1980s. Yet our Disciples witness has been limited to one strong church in the center of the area. First Christian Church (FCC) started in 1959 and has been sharing the Gospel since the 1970s at the corner of Rancho Drive and Mesquite. While FCC has a diverse membership within its almost 500 members, it had not been able to reach many of the ethnic groups that make up the varied population of Las Vegas. In 2003 Ginger and David Jarman became co-senior ministers at FCC. Through their leadership and the leading of the Holy Spirit a new era began to take form. Almost on a weekly basis FCC received visits and requests from new churches to nest in their facility. Yet these new churches were not Disciples and did not seem to fit into the ministry of FCC.

God's plan began to unfold in 2003 when Jo Ann Bynum came to start a regionally initiated project to reach a multi-cultural community of both African American and persons of European American descent. Sierra Christian Church was born five years ago. They currently meet in a library in North Las Vegas but still occasionally use the FCC facility. Since 2003 FCC has opened its doors to Logos Christian Church, which ministers to the Korean community; Première Eglise Evangélique Haïtien that witnesses to the Haitian community; Centro Cristiano Libertad that worships in Spanish; and a United Church of Christ Church that worships in Filipino. The Filipino

church is also in the process of seeking dual recognition from both the Disciples and the UCC.

On any given week there are six congregations worshipping in and/or using the facilities at FCC. David Jarman, co-senior minister at FCC, stated that "this was nothing that we as a church pursued but God saw fit to give us the ministry of accompaniment with these faith communities." With the leadership of the Jarmans, FCC is also exploring the call to be one of the sponsors along with the Pacific Southwest Region to start a new faith community that will share the Gospel with the people of Henderson, Nevada, a southern suburb of Las Vegas.



*Ministers gather for historic photo at FCC. Front Row: Charlie Wallace, Don Dewey, Deliverance Jean Charles and David Jarman. Back Row: Myo Sook Cho, Susan Gonzalez Dewey, Ernie Luat, Pedro Carabello and Ginger Jarman.*

## East Mesa has provided a cloud of witnesses for Coolwater

When David Decker became pastor of East Mesa Christian Church located in East Mesa, Ariz., eight years ago, he had the congregation do an evaluation of what God was calling it to do. Based on the evaluation, the most compelling answer was mission—to extend the Disciples witness beyond East Mesa's doorsteps.

David and Jennie Shirey wanted to plant a church. When they walked into East Mesa, they not only found Christian love and encouragement for their project but they also discovered support in a monetary way. According to Decker, "I knew that this was the mission that East

Mesa needed to support."

Meanwhile, East Mesa had decided to remodel their existing facility. The church worked with Church Extension to get a loan to support the project. East Mesa also created a building campaign to raise money for the project. "We decided to donate 10 percent of all funds raised annually from the building campaign to Coolwater Christian Church." This was to help with the mission of this new church plant.

On September 7, 2003, Coolwater Christian Church in Phoenix, Ariz., had its first service at a local elementary

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# God gave Reyes a sign of confirmation



*Antonio Reyes*

Antonio Reyes, pastor of Cristo Vive, asked God to show him a sign about how he should serve. According to Reyes, the sign he received was so powerful that there was no mistake that it was from God.

Reyes grew up in a very traditional Catholic family in Mexico. At the age of 13 years he entered in seminary to become a priest. He stayed in the seminary until he was 23 years

old. However, after he finished his studies in theology and philosophy, he decided not to continue. He became confused about his calling. According to Reyes, while he respected and loved the Catholic religion, he decided not to become a priest. The main reason for his decision was that although he wanted to serve God, he also wanted a family. "I felt confused as if I was going against my traditions," said Reyes.

It was during this time of not attending church that he asked God to show him a sign of how he should serve. The sign changed his life. Within a week of praying to God for a sign, he went to the hospital because he was having problems with his leg. He described it as an itchy feeling. Then his leg started to swell. After the physicians checked him, he was sent home. He returned the next day because his condition became worse. He was admitted into the hospital for six days. "Doctors could not find out what was wrong," said Reyes. As his condition worsened, the physicians decided to amputate his leg. The night before the surgery he read his Bible. "I remembered what I had

asked God," said Reyes. At that moment he fell down on his knees beside his bed and asked God to forgive him and to confirm how God wanted him to serve. Reyes said at that time he surrendered his life to God. He asked God to decide what to do with his life. This was in 1996.

The next day, doctors decided to operate on Reyes' leg. However, before the surgery the doctors noticed that the infection level in his leg had slightly decreased. According to Reyes, they decided to postpone the surgery and continue monitoring him. A few hours later the infection level had decreased more. "At the end of the day, I walked out of the hospital," said Reyes. "God had confirmed my calling. I completely surrendered my life to God's will."

After many years of being unchurched, Reyes started attending a Christian church in Los Angeles, Calif. It was while attending this church that he re-discovered a new way to serve God. Reyes says that was 11 ½ years ago. "When I started attending the church, I started preaching the word of God right at the beginning of my conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism," he said. Since finding his calling, Reyes has preached at different places throughout the United States, Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

The journey continues. It was two years ago that Reyes, a licensed minister, planted Centro Cristiano Cristo Vive (meaning Christian Church Christ Lives) in Phoenix, Ariz. Family members have joined Reyes at the Disciples church including his wife Maria, six daughters and three brothers. Cristo Vive has 85-90 members and is currently nesting at Larkspur Christian Church. The congregation meets three times a week for service.

"After my experience, no one can tell me that God doesn't exist," says Reyes.

## *East Mesa* (continued from page 1)

school. In November 2006, Coolwater became a charter member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Shirey has watched the church grow during the past five years. "We started with just our family, now we have more than 150 members," he said. Shirey refers to the Bible verse in Hebrews 12:1 when he talks about his gratitude to East Mesa. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

"East Mesa has been a part of the cloud of witnesses," said Shirey. "One of the enemies of a church planter is loneliness," he said. "To have a colleague like David Decker and the East Mesa congregation to provide prayer, presence and financial support has been a blessing. East Mesa's level of commitment has been extraordinary."

Coolwater Christian Church has traveled a long way

in five years, including receiving a Seeds of Promise grant from the Arizona Regional Capital Campaign and securing a loan from Church Extension to help purchase eight acres of land in a developing area of Phoenix that will someday be the location for Coolwater Christian Church.



*David Shirey (with hat) and members of Coolwater gather on the land where the church will be built one day.*

# New church planters experience encouragement while embracing history

If Alexander Campbell could see the Christian Church now, what would he think? As one of the founders of the Christian Church, how would he feel if he could have witnessed the many faces of diversity that were standing around his dining room table or sitting on his front porch on that late evening in May?

As new church planters convened at Bethany College May 20-23 for the fourth annual Super Peer Group/Revival, one of the many items on their agenda was to take in a piece of Disciples history. The New Church Ministry team and church planters had the opportunity to tour the Alexander Campbell estate and connect with Disciples history. The 60 guests were a true representation of the face of the Christian Church in the 21st Century: Hispanic, African American, Anglo, Korean and Haitian ministers gathered with one common goal—to serve God with a passion.



*New church planters pose for a photo at Bethany.*

Each year New Church Ministry hosts a Super Peer Group/Revival that alternates between Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, Ky., and Bethany College in Bethany, W.Va.

This year the new church planters gathered to share thoughts, experiences and concerns about their ministries; and to worship and fellowship together.

The theme for the meeting was Evangelism and Mission World Café. The Super Peer Group, which was held the first 2 ½ days of the event, was designed for new church planters who are in their first or second year of church planting. The famous Meeting House where Alexander Campbell worshiped was the setting for the opening night service. David Vargas, president, Division of Overseas Ministries and co-executive, Global Ministries, was the keynote speaker for the evening's service.

Commencement Hall on the campus of Bethany College was the setting for an open environment for planters to worship, attend workshops and participate in a unique café style dialogue.

The World Café was facilitated by Anne Jennings, a New Church Ministry Barnabas (Coach), who specializes in conflict transformation and organizational/church development for both the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ.

“This event was about serving the planters,” said Rick Morse, vice president of New Church Ministry and Mission Initiatives. “Our planters work diligently at building their ministry and serving God,” he said. “After the second year of planting, ministers have a tendency to feel overworked. This setting provides an opportunity for the planter to revive, retool and refocus.”

“We know that new pastors who have good and healthy relationships with their peers increase their opportunity to succeed in the ministry” said Ketty Santos, minister of the Barnabas/Coaching Program and champion for this event.

Another component for the event was the Revival Track, which included an extra day for pastors who are in years three to five in church planting. Dick Hamm, former general minister and president of the Disciples and a new church planter, was the facilitator for the revival. “You are the agents of God's ongoing creation,” Hamm told the small, intimate group of ministers. “God is doing a new thing in the community of faith.”

Just as the Super Peer Group/Revival began with excitement in worship and praise, the event ended with a powerful ceremonial foot washing service.

“Many planters came to this event not knowing what to expect but they left with feelings of encouragement, refreshment and enthusiasm to go and continue their commitment to serve God,” said Santos.



*Group worship at the Meeting House.*

## Support the Annual Fund for New Church Ministry

Beyond the Pentecost Offering, which is collected during Pentecost season each year, individuals and churches also have the opportunity to support the New Church Movement by providing gifts to the annual fund of New Church Ministry. Visit [www.newchurchministry.org](http://www.newchurchministry.org) for more information.

# Holny Jean Louis walks in the field of service

Holny Jean Louis never imagined one day pastoring The Church of God of the New Jerusalem, which is a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She is a nurse by profession, married and the mother of four children. She drove the church bus, assisted with the church's youth and lady's groups and served under the late pastor, Gerson Prosper. She described her service to the church as "I was in the field walking; just making myself available to serve."

That walk of service was taken to a higher level approximately two years ago when Prosper died. Jean Louis, who is a licensed minister, was thrust into the leadership role as pastor of the church. After the death of the pastor, the congregation, along with the region, had to find someone to step into the role of pastor for the church. Jean Louis explained, "everyone said we know what type of work Holny does in the church...why not let her continue working." They did!

The role of pastor has been challenging but Jean Louis has met the challenge. New Jerusalem is an active and thriving Haitian congregation that meets three times a week at a local Holiday Inn Select in Stamford, Conn., and is open to all. The church, which was planted by the late Pastor Prosper, has approximately 50 members, including

a strong youth group. Jean Louis' prayer is that one day God will provide a building for the congregation.

Jean Louis describes her spiritual journey with passion. "Let me tell you something, it is not about me but about the Holy Spirit," she said.

While attending the Super Peer Group meeting in Bethany in May, Jean Louis offered a word of advice to new church planters. "The victory is for those who stay on their knees and take the time to meditate," she said. "When you pray you communicate with God. But when you meditate you let God tell you what to do. God never gives a vision without the provision."



*Holny Jean Louis helps serve communion.*



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