

The Chapel Project Closes Escrow

Dan Nelson

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Well it happened. Nay Sayers said it couldn't happen. Others were convinced that God said it would. What is "caution thrown to the wind" for one person is a "venture in faith" for another. Whichever the perspective, the facts remain same; we woke up yesterday (June 1) as the new owners of The Chapel on Mahoney in Oak View; and on our anniversary no less.

If you have been following the play-by-play through the whole game, you already know that the face of Christian ministry and outreach in the Ojai Valley has been changing. A number of churches and ministries have been in transition over recent years and with these changes comes a renewed sense of purpose and heart to get God's good news into the lives of those who have never really heard it. It is exciting to see what God is doing here and this is exactly what is going on at "The Chapel" on Mahoney & Apricot in Oak View.

Calvary Chapel has been partnering with other churches since it's beginning as a Bible Study on June 1, 1998 at the Jack Boyd Community Center. That first year of gatherings in the game room provided a framework of both diligent study of the Bible and non-traditional meeting places; both of which would stay with us to this day. We still spend most Sunday mornings in a Community Center, these days it is the one in Oak View. Over the years, we have taken Sunday worship to Libbey Bowl, Sarzotti Park (under the trees), and to the lake. So why are we so excited to remodel an old chapel and move into it?

They say that hindsight is 20/20 vision. Scholars tell us that a proper understanding of our history will help guide wise decisions into the future. The scriptures teach the same. The history of the church around the world is so littered with tragedies that the triumphs are rarely recounted. As I read the annals of church records from the former congregation that met here, it is so exciting to learn of things done well and lives that were impacted in decades gone by that helped carve what we enjoy today in our community. Now I believe what Jesus taught; that we need to live in "today", neither stuck in the past nor longing for a day in the future that may never come. The Bible also exhorts us to understand our place in creation, in relation to God and our fellow man. It is so tempting to over-inflate our own importance. As we attempt to impact this current generation with a message of love and hope in Jesus Christ, I believe it is

important to recognize the validity of what God is doing elsewhere throughout the valley and around the world, and what He has been doing in each generation. On the local front, we have that opportunity here.

Although we may appear a non-traditional church in the outer sense, meaning that we tend to be very casual without a lot of liturgy, ritual, and ceremony, we are very much a traditional church in the truly spiritual sense in that we unite with God Himself and all those who also connect with Him. For us, this is what we mean in "keeping it real". We are a part of the family of God and recipients of His Spirit that Jesus imparted; and God's family is quite diverse. To that end, we desire to reach out to all of those that God puts into our lives, in concert with the larger band of ministries who are doing the same. Here we have the privilege of honoring the past, living abundantly in God's love today, and looking ahead with hope for a bright future.

Although today it feels like I just traversed a marathon, in reality the close of escrow is just the beginning. Now the building remodel goes into full swing and is intended to be done by volunteers as an act of worship unto the Lord. Everyone is invited to join in. Then the monthly and daily maintenance and financial stewardship is a constant reminder of the longer race. More important, the lives that will be touched and changed by what God does through it all. It is a privilege to be in the service of "the living God, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, Who was, and Is, and Is to come, all glory be to Him now and forevermore, in Jesus name, Amen".

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2006. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave, Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View