

Evangel Life Center History

Evangel Life Center is a thriving, lively, and vital congregation united around its God-given mission to **Reach UP, Reach OUT, and Reach Madison and Beyond**. A genuinely diverse fellowship, the average age is in the upper 20's. The people of Life Center support over 40 missionaries and missions agencies as well as hosting the Bread Of Life Food Pantry. With a whole floor devoted to children and a remarkable youth center and media production facilities, there is great investment being made into the next generation. It's a great church because of the great people! It wasn't always like it is now....

The roots of what is now known as **Evangel Life Center** go back many years in Madison history. In the late 1940's a group of believers who had experienced the supernatural power of God desired to establish a fellowship for those who were also coming in to this new, and previously unexplored spiritual experience. The fledgling group contacted several ministers in the Assemblies of God who initially came to help establish a work, among them being **Rev. Sam Johnson**, a young and enthusiastic minister who would go on to a prolific ministry as pastor, evangelist, and missionary. Meetings and services were conducted at a local theater on the near-east side no known as The Barrymore.

The church took over a small building on the city's East Side at 118 North Few Street and decided to name itself **Trinity Pentecostal Church**, distinguishing its doctrine as Trinitarian and Bible-believing, but also open to the moving of this new wind of the Holy Spirit. The church began to grow and with **Rev. Mark Carter** following a succession of pastors, the church began to experience real numerical growth, quickly outgrowing the Few Street location.

Property was purchased on the "Far East side" on Diamond Drive and a brand new church was constructed at 4525 Diamond Drive in 1968. It was in these years that the name was changed and the church formalized its affiliation with the Assemblies of God, becoming **Evangel Temple**.

The 70's and 80's would see the church through many difficult seasons, frequent leadership changes, and the necessity of overcoming a badly soiled reputation in the community. The church name was changed to the less-daunting **Evangel Assembly of God**. It was during these years that **Rev. Andrew Eytzen** provided a stabilizing influence for 13 years, retiring in 1988.

A former district superintendent, **Rev. Darwin Heuser**, came to offer encouragement and help as interim pastor when the church was at its lowest ebb, as it actually seemed the church might have to close its doors in 1991 after declining to as few as 12 attendees, many of them elderly. After the disappointment of having 3 pastoral candidates interview, preach, and be elected, only to then decline the position as pastor, it was obvious the church needed to take a radical step just to survive!

Board member **Lou Cramer** was contacted by Rev. Joel Pavia, District Superintendent who asked Lou to consider a music-ministry couple from Salem, Oregon as pastors. **John & Julie Clark** had never actually *pastored* a church, but they had been mentored by a great pastor, visionary, and leader with Wisconsin roots, the **Rev. Arni Jacobson**. On December 1, 1991, **Rev. John Clark** preached his first-ever Sunday morning sermon to the tiny assembled group on Diamond Drive and was unanimously elected as Senior Pastor that evening by the entire 29 members present. When the Clark's arrived to pastor in January of 1992, the only children in attendance were **Christina** (fourth grade) and **Johnny** (first grade).

The years rolled by and the LORD gave the congregation favor once again. Young families began to plant themselves and many exciting musical events drew hundreds - and even thousands - to the

Evangel Life Center

History

church. All the classrooms, fellowship areas, and sanctuary were filled, staff was hired, the budget for missions exploded and growth by conversion was taking place steadily.

In 1995, Pastor Clark began to seriously look for a new location for the fast-growing church. In October of 1995, a letter arrived from **Pastor George Thomas** of the **St. Paul AME Church** downtown, asking if we knew of any churches for sale. Pastor Clark and Pastor Thomas got together that same day and established a friendship which was instrumental in moving Evangel OUT and St. Paul IN to 4525 Diamond Drive!

The heat was on for Evangel, and they were summarily turned down to rent 44 (!) properties over the next 12 months, eventually renting a failed sports bar in McFarland. The move in April, 1997 was now under the new name that reflected the new vision, **Evangel LIFE CENTER**. Taking the entire proceeds from the sale of the old church, Evangel bought a piece of property on Stoughton Road which at one time was to have been the site of the Wal-Mart. After working through many difficulties with the City of Madison, Madison's first NEW church in 11 years was erected on it's current site at 4402 Femrite Drive. The 26,000 square foot building was erected (from the first concrete pour to occupancy) in **78 days!**

Another beautiful, functional addition and winner of 2 architectural awards was constructed in 2006, bringing a total of over 41,000 square feet of space dedicated to the glory of God. The LORD knew we would need it!

After an extended time of church-wide prayer and fasting in January, 2008, Pastor and Julie Clark reached the most far-reaching decision of their ministry lives - to devote the rest of their time, energy, and lives to fulfill the words of Jesus to "Go and make disciples". This would be the beginning of the discipleship ministry (see that page for more details) and establishing cells for ministry and multiplication.

Stay tuned - the story is far from over and YOU can become part of the next fulfilling phase!

Life Center Board Of Directors

Life Center has chosen to govern itself by conducting the business of the church according to a Constitution & Bylaws that were written by the congregation and amended as necessary. The Board of Directors make the "business" decisions for the congregation; establishing budgets, making certain resources are in place for every ministry and department, seeing that every bill and vendor are paid in a timely manner, and to act as the "trustees of real property."

While the Board makes does not involve itself in ministry decisions, they are men and women with ministry hearts and administrative gifts to see the work of ministry and the vision of Life Center move forward. Their duties and qualifications are detailed in the Constitution & Bylaws.

The Board is elected as a group (not as individuals) at the annual business meeting in May of each year after being chosen by a nominating committee which is comprised of lay ministry leaders as outlined in the Bylaws.

Mission Statement

Reaching UP, Reaching OUT, Reaching Madison and BEYOND!

Evangel Life Center

History

Those three facets drive the ministry of Life Center! Love God, love people, and love the work He's given us to accomplish.

Reaching UP - speaks to the most basic need of every person on the planet to have **our relationship restored** with our Creator. This can only happen through genuine repentance from our sins (which broke our relationship with God) and turning to Jesus Christ, believing He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Everyone needs the cross!

Reaching OUT - expresses the need we have to live in community and **flourish** as believers. We need one another for strength, encouragement, friendship and to "do life" according to the Bible. You'll sense a genuine love when you come through the doors, because we believe God sent you our way and that makes YOU His GIFT to US. We loved you before you even showed up! The cell ministry exists to further deepen relationships and become Christlike.

Reaching Madison and Beyond is the "go" part of the Gospel. Really - we want to see EVERY person in Dane County saved and serving God. **It's His desire, so it needs to be ours.** The "beyond" part means our responsibility extends beyond the borders of our city, and we gladly support the work of over 40 missionaries all over the globe - the sun never sets on the ministry of Evangel Life Center!