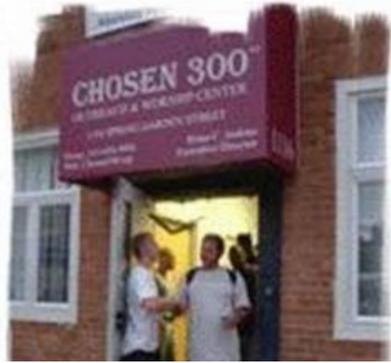




Chosen 300 Ministries Names BranchCreek “Church of the Year”

For the second year in a row, BranchCreek has been named “Church of the Year” by Chosen 300 Ministries. The ministry is made up of 25 Philadelphia-area churches, including BranchCreek, that support the Outreach Center at 1116 Spring Garden St., Philadelphia. The participating churches provide meals and hold worship services for the guests at this soup kitchen facility. BranchCreek, under the direction of Nancy Wright, goes down once a month to worship and feed the guests. This past year, a team of BranchCreek members also helped in other ways, as Executive Director Brian Jenkins explained:



“Over the past three years your church has assisted us in several ways,” he said. “Jay Hambleton, Pastor Bob and the men of Branch saved us thousands of dollars in man labor in the renovation of our feeding and chapel center. More notably, under the amazing leadership of Nancy Wright, your church has provided monthly meals and evangelistic services to our homeless guests at our center. There are four areas of expectations we have for the churches that provide these services: effective worship, quality of food, quality of service, and supplemental support. Nancy and her team have exceeded expectations in every area in the last two years of their service.

They have also won the Church of the Year award two years in a row, 2004 and 2005. You should understand that this is tremendous and something your church should be proud of. Out of twenty-five churches in the Philadelphia area you are #1. GO BRANCH!”

World Outreach Update

The following looks at another aspect of the World Outreach ministry here at BranchCreek. This time, we explore Samaria.

What is SAMARIA?

Samaria is an outreach to areas outside of Harleysville where there are those who need to hear the Gospel and need help economically, emotionally, and/or physically, as well. Samaria also presents the opportunity for those from BCC to worship and fellowship with members of diverse communities.

Currently we have two ministries helping to feed and attend to the needs of the hungry and homeless in Philadelphia: Harambe and Chosen 300.

Harambe is coordinated by Betty Kratz. We gather at BCC quarterly (the 5th Tuesday in a month) and travel to Philadelphia to feed those who are less fortunate. If you are interested in helping with this ministry, please contact Betty Kratz for more information call her at 215-723-7492.

Chosen 300 is also a ministry in Philadelphia that cares for the hungry and homeless, providing nourishment for their bodies as well as their souls. There are many opportunities to serve in this ministry from food preparation and service to participating on the worship team or spending time with the homeless. Please contact Nancy Wright at newright@verizon.net if you would like to be a part of this ministry.

Haven of Hope is another outreach in Philadelphia coordinated by Dave Brecht. This ministry helps women who may have been abused physically and emotionally and are recovering from drug addiction. This ministry helps these women

get a new start in life as they become acquainted with Jesus Christ. The goal is to reunite them with their children, creating God-centered families. There are many needs in this ministry from teaching a women’s Bible study to becoming a mentor for the women. Please contact Dave Brecht at cbrecht@aol.com if you are interested in helping with this ministry.



At this time we are also coordinating efforts to help our brothers and sisters affected by hurricane Katrina. The current need is for skilled, professional help laying carpet and tile. We also need housing for evacuees coming to this area. If you can help or are interested in supporting these efforts, financially or physically (once a trip is arranged), please contact Evelyn Haile, Coordinator of Samaria, at ehaileperk@aol.com or Kathy Nomides, Director of World Outreach, at kathy.nomides@branchcreek.org.

Samaria is also organizing short-term mission trips within the United States. Look for more information regarding these trips in the near future!

Please remember to pray for Samaria as we obey Christ. I thank you and bless you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for your continued prayers and support.

**SPECIAL EDITION
NOVEMBER 2005**



Core Team Let God Set the Direction for Branch

For those who’ve been at BranchCreek for less than its three decades, it’s hard to imagine a world without our auditoriums and 45-acre campus. And to get an idea where BranchCreek will be heading over the next 30 years, it’s a good idea to go back 30 years.

The fact is there was no BranchCreek Community Church 30 years ago. But there were several couples who were caught up in the spiritual renewal that was sweeping the country at that time. These couples were all devout members of their own congregations – but they felt an urge to move beyond their church doors. They wanted to reach people that their home churches were not reaching. There was Bob and Betty Kratz, Ernie and Naomi Clemmer, and Clarence and Marie Landis. They were three couples, on fire for the Lord and praying for a way to reach their neighbors.

“We were three couples – neighbors who prayed together for our community,” remembers Pastor Bob. At that point, the Clemmers and the Landis families were selling off their farm land to



Seeking God's Will for Branch Fellowship were (starting at the left) Pastor Bob, Jim and Millie Maust, Craig and Sally Bishop, and Betty Kratz.

developers. The couples felt the urge to pray for their new neighbors moving into the area.

Pastor Bob, serving as the mission coordinator for the Franconia Mennonite Conference was sent to a seminar that focused on the early church, as represented in the book of Acts. Instead of a physical church, the “church” the conference discussed was a small group of people who met and worshipped in a house. With the blessing of five different Mennonite churches, the three couples

agreed to give this concept a try. “We finally decided to commit ourselves to the idea,” said Pastor Bob.

At this same time, Jim and Millie Maust were trying to figure out what God wanted them to do with their lives. Caught up in the spiritual renewal, Jim walked away from his insurance career – where a young Sally Bishop was his secretary. As part of the singing group, “The Gospel Folk,” Jim and Millie focused on touring and performing. “We were being so renewed,” remembers Millie. “We were

giving ourselves to the Lord. Jim felt he should make himself available to the Lord, not knowing what was ahead.” At the same time, Craig and Sally Bishop were also seeking God’s direction for their lives.

The Mausts received a letter from Pastor Bob while in Florida, asking if Jim would be interested in joining the core team that wanted to plant a home church. The Mausts agreed and the core team met for several months, listening to God and trying to discern His will for them. They agreed it would be a house church whose goal was to reach the community. The team decided to contact Craig, who had a degree in religion. After visiting hundreds of churches while accompanying Sally on a musical tour, Pastor Craig was beginning to challenge traditional ideas about church and was forming new dreams for a local church..

Craig was once asked, “How would you do it if you were starting a church?” Together Jim and Craig started studying Acts 2 and the practices of the Early Church. Their discussion formed a tem-

BranchCreek says “DANKE” to the Community

There’s a new word in BranchCreek’s vocabulary and it’s DANKE. Delivering Acts of Neighborly Kindness to Everyone. As part of our 30th anniversary celebration, the leadership of BranchCreek asked us to give back to the community that has been so good to us over the last 30 years. Some 65 people from BranchCreek responded, going out in the community to deliver some of those neighborly acts of kindness. Whether it was an act of service or it was a homemade cake that was delivered, the day was as rewarding for those who served as it was for those who were served.

A dozen people went to Sebastian Riding Associates in Worcester, a horseback riding program for disabled children. The BranchCreek team added topsoil to the long driveway, cleared brush from riding trails and set up computers in the office.

Another team went to Paradise Manor, a senior facility in Hatfield, where the BranchCreek team did some chores that the regular staff hasn’t been able to get to. The work did not go un-noticed. Pastor Craig received this letter in the mail from Karen Wright, the director of Paradise Manor, the week after DANKE.

“On Monday (after DANKE day), I came in and was consumed with my work load, not noticing anything. Then on Tuesday night while going to my car I noticed the bushes by the ramp were no longer bushy, Ha! My eyes followed the other bushes

and then I looked back at the house. “Oh,” I said the leaves are gone, the windows washed, the shrubs trimmed. What a beautiful JOB! Well done! Oh praise God for His goodness. Now I am typing this with tears of joy. How He saw fit to send you folks. Alleluia! Praise His Wonderful Name!

“These sort of things can weigh heavy on me as an administrator as to how they are going to get done. We have a limited staff and income. People today don’t want to do ‘good works’ unless they get paid. I pray the Lord will bless you with an eternal pay for you kindness to us here at Paradise Manor. I pray you will keep us in mind in the future if that is how the Lord leads,” wrote Karen.

Dozens of BranchCreek chefs also made baked goods to take out to those who serve

our community – groups like fire departments, police, and businesses that have been especially generous to BranchCreek over the last 30 years. The coordinator of DANKE Day, Sheri Reinhart, and her daughter were part of the team who delivered baked goods. “It was so wonderful to watch the faces of our public servants when we presented them with baked goods from BranchCreek on DANKE day,” said Sheri. “It was worth it just to see the reaction we got from people. My daughter went in each place with me. She was so proud to be a ‘little’ ambassador for BranchCreek.”



CHRISTMAS HAPPENINGS

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR
CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

**12/24 Christmas Eve
4:00, 5:30, 7:00 pm
“Find Your Way Home”
– Pastor Craig**

**12/25 Christmas Day
9, 10:30 am, 12noon
“Here Today-Home Tomorrow”
– chuck faber**

SINGLE ADULT MINISTRY

invites you to an evening
of festivities on
Friday, Dec. 30, 8 - 10 pm

rescheduled!



games, singing, live music, an inspirational holiday reflection, great food & meet new friends

Contact: Kathy Nomides
215.256.0100 x 114

Music Notes

by Dave Thompson

Choir Camp - Dec. 10

Robin Zaruba and Brenda Morrone will conduct a Choir Camp for our Seasonal Choir that will perform during Christmas Eve Services. The group will perform a medley of many Christmas favorites at all three services on Dec. 24 at 4:00, 5:30 and 7:00pm. The camp is a great opportunity to polish the material and parts the choir has been practicing every Wednesday night since early November. The camp runs from 9am- 12 noon on Saturday, Dec. 10, and they will be “going over the Christmas music with a fine-tooth comb,” said Robin.

Robin also offered, “Brenda will be covering basics of group singing, including proper breathing, posture, diet, vocal warm-ups, etc., as well as micro-

phone technique for lead worshipers. Chris Benge, our Audio Engineer, will also be coaching on technical aspects of choir and lead worship as it relates to sound engineering. We will take the things we learn and apply them to our Christmas music.”

The event is for all Seasonal Choir performers, but is also open to anyone who is interested. If you think you might like to sing for God in our Choir, come and see first hand what the group is about. This is a “no-obligation” way to see the group in action from a “behind the scenes” perspective. This camp is an annual event, and our next seasonal Choir will form prior to Easter. A continental breakfast will be provided.

Note: The Choir will also be going to a local nursing home to sing traditional Christmas carols after lunch, for all who are interested. It will be great fun and a great way to put feet to our faith!

Early Days at Branch - continued

plate that became a pattern for future ministry.

The first service was held in Ernie and Naomi Clemmer’s house – where the fledgling Branch Fellowship Church met for about three months. It was a service that Pastor Bob missed because he was being treated for cancer. It was in the Clemmer’s house that Pastor Craig preached his first sermon. He remembers, with some chagrin, delivering that message in the Fall of 1975. Pastor Craig ended up knocking over the music stand that served as a podium and pages of his notes were scattered all over the floor.

“I learned very early on not to trust in human abilities” says Pastor Craig. “If God guides, He will provide.”

As the group outgrew the basement, Jim and Millie went looking for a house in the community that could double as a house church. They found a house with a big basement in Telford – a basement that was eventually filled to the rafters with 120 people attending on some Sundays. The fledgling flock knew needed to find more space than the basement could provide. So after about 18 months, Branch Fellowship moved to the Franconia Township building – the first in successively larger facilities.

Looking back, that core team admits no one could have predicted BranchCreek would grow the way it did – nobody but God. “An early commitment not to outline where we were going to go, was replaced with a commitment to go with the gifts that God had placed in the con-

Tony Campolo speaks at BCC next Saturday

Men’s Ministry of BranchCreek is opening the doors of its Saturday, Dec. 10 meeting to everyone interested in hearing Dr. Tony Campolo, professor emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University in St. Davids. The gathering is from 8 to 10 am.

Sometimes described as spiritual advisor to President Clinton, Dr. Campolo is far more than that. He is the founder of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education (EAPE) and has provided the leadership to create, nurture and support programs for “at-risk” children in cities across the United States and Canada. He has also helped to establish schools and universities in several developing countries.

Dr. Campolo is currently an associate pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia.

The Montco Bible Fellowship Choir will also be performing a special worship set before Dr. Campolo speaks.

All are welcome next Saturday.

gregation,” said Jim Maust.

Pastor Bob agrees that a 1,200-seat auditorium was not part of his vision for BranchCreek – but he is quick to add that he can see now that God had his hand in it.

“If you go back, we started as a small group,” says Pastor Bob. “Now, we have 60 or so small groups at work in BranchCreek and that warms my heart. Now I can connect the dots. I tell every small group that God may want you to do something far beyond your imagination.”

What a different world we would live in now if those early members had not let God lead their lives.