

# Presbytery Life

A Newsletter of the Regional Church of New Jersey in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

December, 2009

## Two Pulpits Vacant in the Presbytery

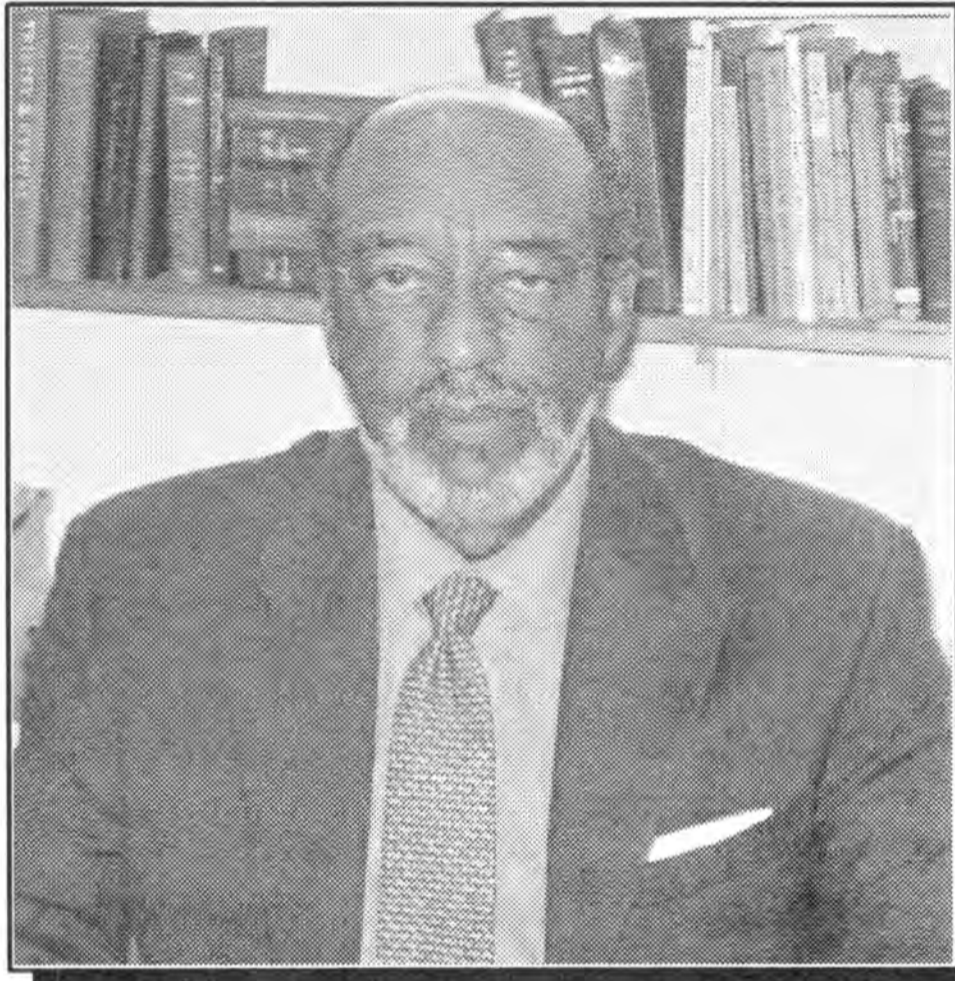
### Mt. Carmel Church - Somerset

On August 15, 2009 a retirement celebration banquet was held for the Rev. Robert J. Cameron, former pastor of the Mt. Carmel Church (OPC) in Somerset, NJ. Pastor Cameron, now 77, left the pulpit to undergo treatment for colon cancer several months ago. Recently after his last scheduled treatment, the cancer was reported to be in remission. Praise God! Mr. Cameron continues to be active around the church. A session-erected pulpit search

committee has been evaluating perspective pastoral candidates.

Mt.

Carmel Church was founded in 1978 by Pastor Cameron, as Mt. Carmel Reformed Episcopal Church. The first worship services were held in the Chapel of Grant's Funeral Home, Somerset, NJ on September 17, 1978. There were about 24 people in attendance, 12 of whom were committed to working for the Lord. Four of



the 12 were students of Rutgers University. Prior to establishing the church, the Cameron's met regularly in their home with a small bible study group. Pastor Donald Reader of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Somerset, NJ and the members of this bible group encouraged Mr. Cameron to organize a church.

The group met in the funeral home for about three months, when it was decided that the services should move to a different location, Pine Grove Manor Elementary School was selected. The meetings were held there until August 1981. Because of the difficulty in establishing a worshipful atmosphere in the school and rent increases, Pastor and Mrs. Jackie Cameron built an addition to their home at 305 West Point Avenue, Somerset, NJ with the capacity to seat about 75 people. The addition was completed in August 1981. The church services were at that location until 1990.

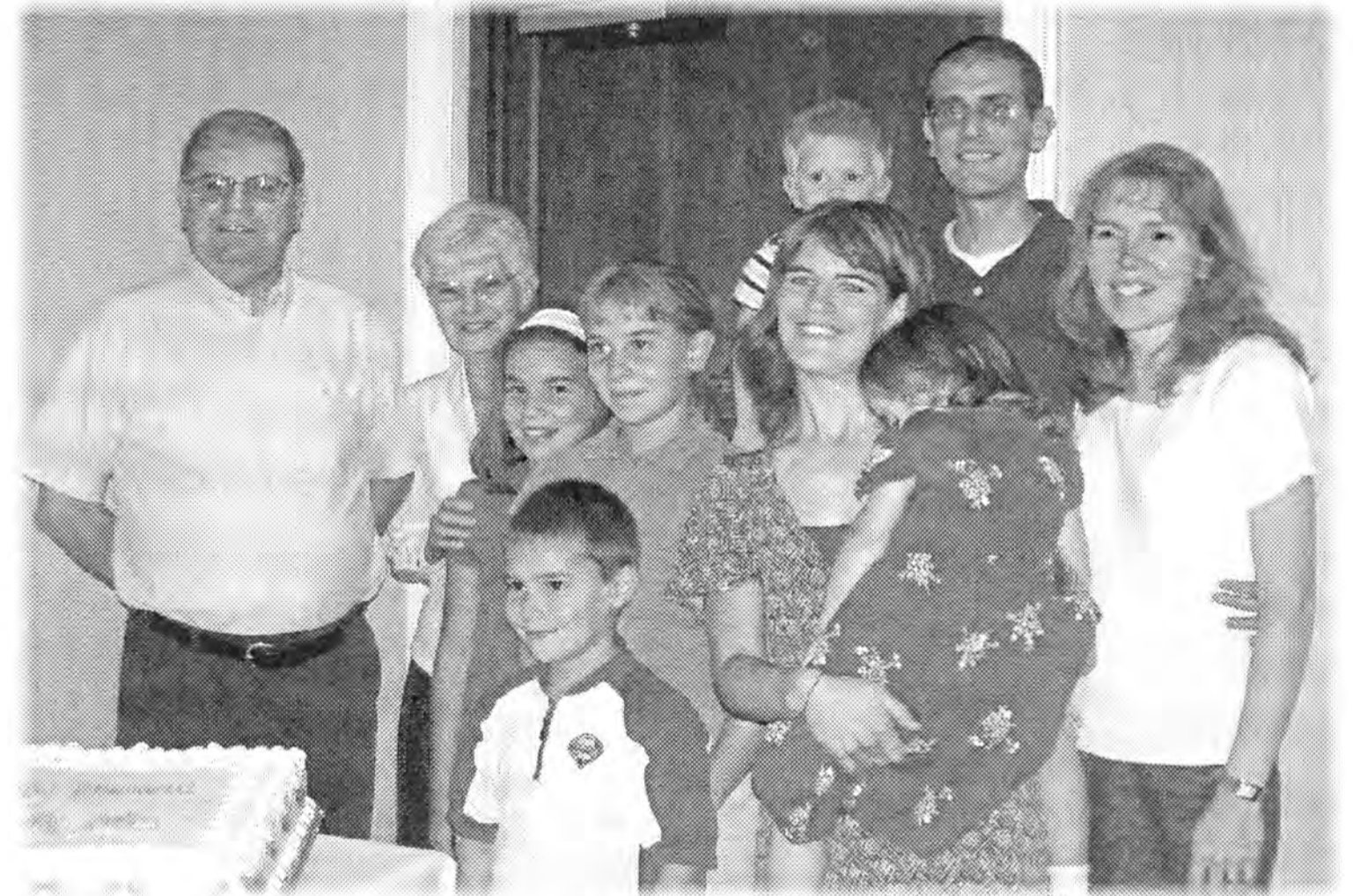
Neighbors complained to the township about church services being held in a residential neighborhood. This resulted in a four year struggle. The case was taken to the New Jersey Supreme Court where it was decided in 1985 in favor of Mt. Carmel Church. During this time services continued to be held in their home. The case gained national attention. The township changed its zoning ordinance to allow churches to meet in all zones while the case was in the courts.

In 1986, the church purchased six acres of land in Somerset where a public church building was built. The present building was occupied in November 1995.

### Grace Church - Trenton

On Sunday, August 30, Rev. Richard A. Nelson preached his final sermon as pastor of Grace Church in Trenton (Hamilton Township), NJ. On Saturday, members of the congregation along with family and friends gathered for a dinner in his honor and to give glory to Christ. Rev. Ross Graham spoke of Rev. Nelson as a trailblazer for the soon-to- retire baby boomer pastors. The congregation thanked Rev. and Mrs. Nelson for their 32 years of faithful service at Grace Church.

Pastor Nelson served in two churches previously. He and wife Jean raised three children while at Grace Church. All three of his kids are married and they have eight grandchildren with one coming. He enjoyed going to General Assembly and served on many committees of the Presbytery. He and Jean are now living in Jersey Shore, PA.



**Rick Jean & some of the extended family**

The pulpit was declared vacant in September. The session has erected a pastoral search committee. Men from New Jersey to California to Canada have applied. The current goal is to present a candidate to the congregation for a vote by mid January 2010. Pray for the Lord's wisdom in this matter.

The members of Mt. Carmel in March, 1988 voted to leave the Reformed Episcopal Church because the Reformed Episcopal Church would not allow them to change its worship format to suit, more acceptably, those they were attempting to reach. Although the proposal was not unbiblical, the bishops refused to yield. They then became members of the Presbyterian Church of America. This resulted in a name change to Mt. Carmel Church PCA. However, in 1998 because of a controversy over the doctrine of creation they severed their relationships with the PCA. Mt. Carmel Church subsequently joined the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

# News from the Churches

## Faith Church - Pole Tavern Celebrates Reformation Day

by Lauri Wilke

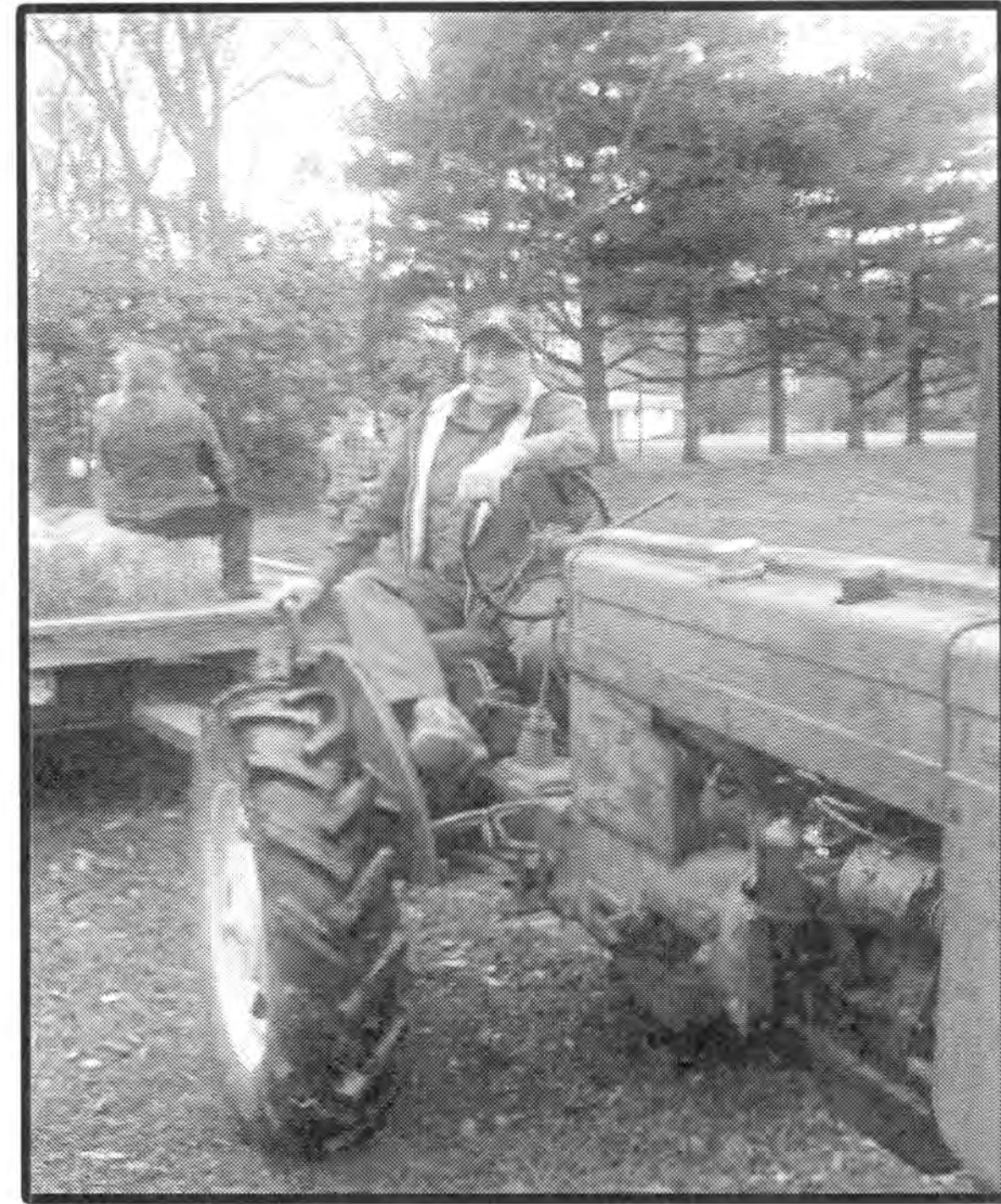
It has been almost 500 years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany – but the sound of his hammer has been resounding down through the ages and around the world ever since. During the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, October 31 and November 1 the echo of Martin's hammer could be heard across the ripe corn fields of rural Salem County, New Jersey, as the congregations of Covenant OPC (Vineland), New Hope OPC (Bridgeton), and Faith OPC (Pole Tavern) gathered together to celebrate the anniversary of his bold action and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Things kicked off with folks being pulled along by Faith OPC deacon Russ Gandy and his antique John Deere farm tractor on a hayride through the fields behind the church, followed by a delicious meal expertly prepared by Faith's elder Frank Romeo and his hard working kitchen crew. After dinner everyone enjoyed the music of a group of very talented young men from Faith's congregation (Chris Elwell, Jon Rosenbaum, Kirk Ellis and Reece Wilke) who reminded all, with one of the songs they sang that "...there is no one like our God".

It was then time to settle down to some serious reflection on one of the pivotal leaders of the Protestant Reformation – John Calvin. The guest speaker for the weekend, the Reverend, Dr. Stephen Nichols, Research Professor of Christianity and Culture and the Chair of the Biblical Division of Lancaster Bible College and Graduate School, spoke engagingly on the life of John Calvin, particularly the time that Calvin spent in Geneva, Switzerland. The lecture was titled "An Overnight Stay in Geneva: John Calvin as Reluctant Reformer".

The theme of the Reformation continued the next morning as Dr. Nichols taught the adult Sunday School class a lesson he called "Why Theology Matters for Life, With a Little Help from John Calvin" and then preached from Psalm 90 a sermon titled "How to Be Relevant 500 Years From Now".

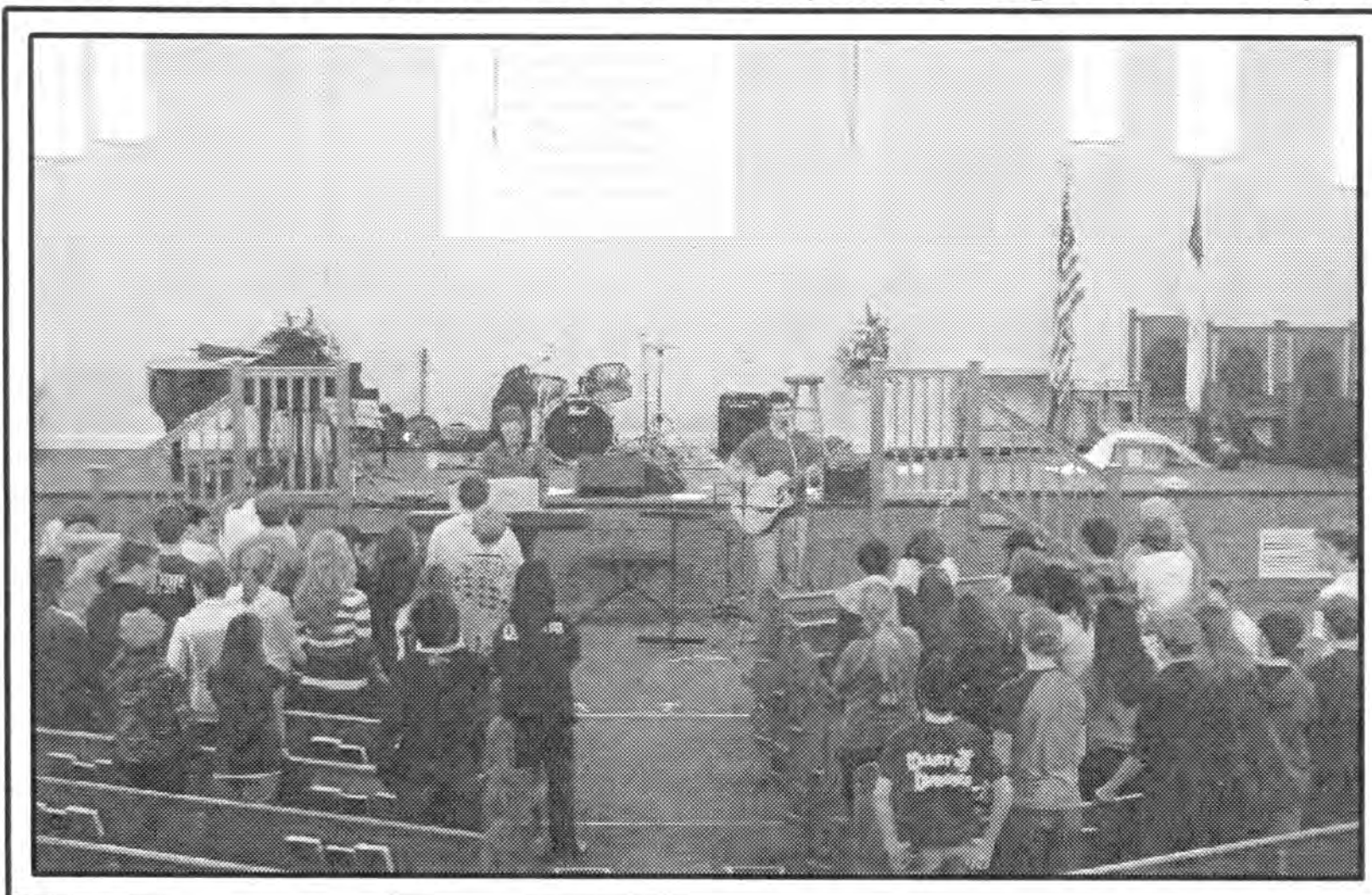
Did the Reformers know that they would be relevant 500 years later? Did they realize that the effects of what, by the grace of God, they accomplished would reverberate through the centuries in the hearts of God's people all over the world? Or that Christians in a small farming community across a mighty ocean from Europe would one day, hundreds of years after the Reformers had died, be remembering what God had done through them, and still be singing the words penned by Martin Luther so long ago – "...His kingdom is forever!"



## Faith Church Hosts Senior High Rally

Approximately 50 young people traveled from all over the tri-state area of South Jersey, North Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware to Faith Church, Pole Tavern to attend the Fall Rally. Up to 10 post-high (former Faith Church Senior Highers) helped out with the rally. Great support was received from the whole church in helping provide food. A group of men made a great breakfast, some women made delicious hoagies for lunch, and we had LOTS of snacks provided by so many in the church.

The activity for the weekend split the group into 4 teams to conduct the OPC OlymPiCs. The teams competed in various competitions like basketball shooting, the "take-care-of-a-baby" event, the breakfast sandwich cookoff, pie eating contest, golf putting, the obstacle course, and the final, "Championship" tug of war. The young people had a great time competing against each other.



The music was led by Chris Byrd and Joel Hoogerhyde. They did a great job of focusing the music in worship of the Lord. They ensured that the music wasn't to keep the young people "entertained" but instead focused on the Lord.

The speaker was Conrad Tolosa from Harrisburg, PA. Conrad has a real passion to speak to teenagers. He has spoken at other teen gatherings, like Christian music festivals. Conrad spoke at the Senior High Rally in Nov '04 and he really connected with the high school kids. His funny, off-the-wall style definitely kept the kids engaged. Conrad's theme for the weekend was "How Am I Supposed To Glorify God". His ending application to the young people was that the first place they can "start" glorifying God is in their home with their parents and siblings.

Overall, it was a great time of fun, fellowship, worshipping our Lord, and learning more about glorifying Him with our lives.

# News from the Churches

## Grace Church - Pennsville

by Dave Glading

On September 19 from 8 am to 12 noon, Grace Church in Pennsville had a yard sale, actually a free yard/garage sale. In January of 2009 our Fellowship Committee got together to plan events for the coming year. One of the suggestions was to have a yard sale to collect money that we could send to OPC Foreign Missions. It was also discussed that we could have a bake sale and lemonade stand at the same time. Since we had never done anything like this before there was much enthusiasm for the idea. It was also going to be a way to have the community visit our church as an outreach opportunity. Then the session suggested that there be no charge for the items at yard sale. The idea was to show the cost of salvation also to be free! At first it wasn't the easiest sell to the yard sale organizers. How can we collect money if it's free? Can we charge for the baked goods? But once they understood the biblical idea behind it, the radical idea that we will give things away free, let people know why, and leave the rest to God, it really took off. We sent out letters to several OPC churches asking if they would donate items. We had a wonderful response from Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE. Their pastor was thrilled with our idea of "free"! We told the churches that we would be willing to pick up whatever they would be willing to donate.

Over a period of months, we filled four rooms at the church with donated items; clothing, furniture, house wares, games, and books. Our members distributed fliers throughout our community. We ran an ad in the local paper two days prior to the event. Two weeks before the giveaway, we met at the church and sorted through all the items. It took many hours, but the fellowship was wonderful.

Three days before the giveaway we had a visit from a local social worker, who saw our fliers, in need of whatever we might have to help a Latino couple in need. We assisted her in going through what we had available and helped her fill her van.

The night before the giveaway we gathered at the church to set up tables and all the stuff we had. We set up a lemonade stand, had coffee and baked goods, all free.

We opened the doors at 7:30 am and had several people waiting to get in. From 8 am until 10 am we had a steady stream of people. We had at least 50-75 people come through our doors. Bags made up with our logo and Grace Church and OPC material to give away. We helped those who needed it to load items in their cars.

The response was overwhelming. We all had the opportunity to tell people, as they expressed their amazement that it was all free, to explain to them that salvation is free. We had several conversations with those who knew nothing about the OPC. Although all was free, we did except donations at the lemonade stand, which we collected \$75 that was put in with our missions collection that Sunday. I had several people want to give me money; they felt bad about taking things for free. Another opportunity to talk about Christ's work on the cross!

At the end of the day, we were able to give away about half of everything we had. All the furniture went, including two dryers and a washer. But the most important thing we accomplished was to bring glory to God, for without his grace this would not have happened the way it did! We actually had to put away some folding chairs that we had out, people wanted to take them. We have stored away what we had left and will plan another one in the spring.

We were very pleased with the turnout and felt it was a wonderful way to meet members of the community. It was a "yard sale" where you not only got lots to pick from, but you did it indoors, with a hot cup of coffee and a donut, and no pressure. It was a lot of work and we again want to thank those from Emmanuel OPC in Delaware for their assistance. We would advocate any church doing this as a means of drawing closer to the community.



## Covenant Church - Vineland



The Covenant Coffee House mission is to glorify God through Christian music and fellowship. Their message is salvation by faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone. Their mandate is to proclaim the Word of the Lord to all who will listen. Covenant Church in Vineland wanted to create a place where Christians could come together and enjoy FREE - live music, great food and fellowship. They also knew of some talented local Christian musicians who love performing but needed a venue. The coffee house crowd is made up of singles, couples and families. Their musicians vary in age and style, and are always looking for volunteers who want to perform. Their refreshments include savory snacks, sweet confections and a wide range of hot and cold beverages. A night of great music, food and Christian friends. They meet at Covenant Church every second Saturday of the month at 7 PM. The next one will be Dec. 12, 2009. Check out their web site at: [covenantcoffeehouse.com](http://covenantcoffeehouse.com).

# A Report from Wildwood and the "Nor'Easter Storm"

By Jon Stevenson

The storm that bore down on the New Jersey coast line last month brought back memories of extreme high tides in North Wildwood. While on the edge of the flood zone, which can cover up to one half of the Western or bayside part of the Island, the K-House residence of the Chapel Director was spared. The first floor of the house is well above flood waters, but the basement can rapidly fill with three feet of salt water if pumps or "sandbagging" of the outside basement entrance fails. Four times in our 32 year stay at the K-House the Stevensons have had to bail out the basement. If the pump fails, the salt water will do damage, reaching the base of the appliances that cannot be raised to full safety due to the low basement ceiling.

Several major tides rolled in during the storm period from Thursday through Saturday, two of which surrounded our block covering the sidewalks and lawns of our neighbors. As the K-house is in the center and higher portion of the block the tide did not advance enough this time to enter the basement. However, seepage from the high tide did bring in over a foot of water over time which was easy for the pump to handle.

The Boardwalk Chapel is pretty well isolated from the ocean waves these days in that the beach has grown so much in the past 40 years. It is now well over a quarter of a mile walk from the Boardwalk to the ocean.

While storms can drive water up to or even under the Chapel, the secondary waves that cause this are very anemic and thus not a cause for alarm. The main concerns with the Chapel are the high winds that often buffet the building tossing roof shingles onto the boardwalk. This often occurs with the 50 plus mile per hour gusts during less news worthy Nor' Easters that breeze quickly by Wildwood a couple of times a year.

The difference of this storm compared to the ones that we experience on a "regular" basis, was that the breeze continued to howl for three straight days forcing the water into the back bays at high tide, holding it there during low tide, and then bringing water on top of it on the following high tides. It was a major and destructive event that was predicted to be far more serious than it was.

The Dunn House Dorm where the summer staff reside was not in harms' way, other than some shingle damage or rain intrusion. The North Wildwood beach was reported to have severe erosion.



Glenwood Street in North Wildwood

---

## Grace Church - Trenton Farewell to Rick & Jean



Some of the congregation, family and friends