

30 Years of Grace Anniversary Concert

Band	<i>Shout to the Lord</i>
The Choir	<i>Majesty and Glory</i>
Jim Dixon	Welcome
Steve Proctor	<i>The Lord's Prayer</i>
Gari Mitchell, Dick Schultz, Marcia Schultz	<i>Jesse Taylor</i>
Kerry Conner	<i>Take Me Through the Fire</i>
Reflections	<i>New Planting</i>
The Choir	<i>Cornerstone</i>
Lance Garrett, Band	<i>Jesu, Joy of Man's Desire</i>
Janet Mayhue Choyce	<i>All in Favor</i>
Reflections	<i>Branching Out</i>
Marcia Schultz	<i>Mary Did You Know?</i>
The Choir	<i>My Life is in Your Hands</i>
Steve Brown, Todd Chapel, Rick Cummins, Mark Middlebrooks Gerry Sandoval, Randy Sapp	<i>Favorite Song of All</i>
The Choir	<i>To Love Our God</i>
Evan Dalrymple, LaVada Torzewski	<i>The Prayer</i>
Nick Carleton, Dance Team	<i>How He Loves</i>
Reflections	<i>Firmly Rooted</i>
The Choir	<i>Jesus Saves</i>
The Choir	<i>He Reigns Forever</i>



From the Beginning...

Those who create something from the ground up...who embark on something new...often have a moment of panic. It comes just before the big project is about to launch. What if no one else likes it? What if no one comes to see it?

Table of Contents

- From the Beginning *Page 1*
- When It All Began *Page 2*
- Orchard Road - 1982 *Page 4*
- Colorado Boulevard - 1985 *Page 8*
- Grace Boulevard - 1995 *Page 12*
- The New Millennium - 2000 *Page 14*
- Looking Ahead - 2012 *Page 18*

Thirty years ago, Jim Dixon and Bob Beltz sure felt that way. As they sat in the old Littleton farmhouse they'd converted into an office, they had their doubts. At ages 36 and 32, Jim and Bob were starting a new church. The building was bought, the staff hired, but there was no certainty that anyone would show up. Who steps out in faith like that? Thankfully for thousands of us, these brave men of God did.

Jim and Bob were a bit emotional when the cars started pulling into the parking lot for the very first service. They remember it like it was yesterday, yet Jim admits: "I was so nervous, I don't remember anything I said that day."

Fellow Cherry Hills co-founder Bo Mitchell says he never had a doubt about the potential of this new church, and he was right. On March 7, 1982, 350 people came to hear the Word of God. And so an influential church based on the Word of God, and started by three young men filled with hope, was born.



When It All Began

In 1981, John Elway was still throwing a football for Stanford, cell phones were the size of bricks, there was no Coors Field and most people thought apples were just something to eat. There were plenty of events shaping our society. Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II were both recovering from gunshot wounds as Prince Charles and Lady Diana celebrated their storybook wedding in London's St. Paul's Cathedral. Sandra Day O'Connor was about to become the first female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court and the space shuttle Columbia thrilled the world with its first orbit of the planet.

Bo Mitchell was starting to sense a calling. His friend Bob Beltz was leading a Bible study for men in a friend's home, and together they worked with co-leader Everett Dye steering a ministry called Eye of the Needle, which sought to help wealthy men center their relationships on Christ.

One weekend the three men and their wives went to Vail on a planning and prayer retreat, where Bob brought up the idea of starting a church. He saw the Bible study growing, but recognized the wives and children

were being left out. Bo asked Bob if he intended to be the pastor. Bob said no, but that he knew just the man to lead a new church: Jim Dixon. At the time Jim was the Director of Education at Faith Presbyterian Church in Aurora, and Bob was leading the church's adult education ministry there. Bob encouraged Bo to listen to Jim preach. After hearing Jim's sermon, Bo was convinced and started looking for a church building. Bo knew the perfect leaders to start a new church had been found.

"There was a lot of courage in Christ. When you start taking away things that look sure, everybody's leapin' off a cliff together. It was courageous of the wives particularly. They were following what their husbands felt was the call of God and they're jumpin' on board." –Susie Miller on original staff spouses

"You'd hear Christ every time they spoke," Bo said.

But life is seldom problem free. When asked if he would join them in the new adventure, Jim Dixon said no. He had no ambition to plant a church, and he was happy in his position at Faith Presbyterian where Pastor Dean Wolf was mentoring him and encouraging him in Scripture memory.

Bo wasn't giving up so easily, and finally found a small church building for sale on East Orchard Road in Littleton. After much prayer, Jim and his wife Barb felt God leading them to come on board, just as long as Bob would be a part of it.



"Three Men and a Maybe"
Bob Beltz, Bo Mitchell and Jim Dixon

Jim also wanted an office manager and a children's ministry director hired immediately. Cherry Hills Community Church was officially incorporated on August 21, 1981.

It would take much prayer, determination and monetary help to make the dream a reality. Bo was able to raise \$20,000 for a down payment

on the Littleton building. And a handful of business leaders pledged to cover the \$30,000 in monthly expenses for two years if necessary.

Jim and Bob got to work hiring the kinds of people who could help make this new church great. Their friend Everett Dye, a retired Air Force officer with leadership experience, came on as business manager. Jim believed the children's ministry programs had to be top notch or the parents wouldn't stay, so their co-worker at Faith Presbyterian, Susie Miller, was hired as the Director of Children's Ministry. Another hard working friend in Christ, Judy Fields, was hired as church secretary. A dedicated staff of five was now in place.



Orchard Road - 1982

Jim and Bob were astounded as they realized hundreds of people were in attendance at the first service. They had plenty of encouragement and help. Dean Wolf, Jim and Bob's former boss, had announced from his pulpit at Faith Presbyterian the week before that Cherry Hills would be opening its doors. Many who came that first day were Faith members who had driven over from Aurora.

And among the others who came to see what all the excitement was about were Dick Schultz, his wife Marcia and their four young children. Schultz was a Young Life leader who Jim knew and had asked to take pictures

that morning. Dick was curious, but Marcia was doubtful. "I was thinking God could not possibly work that way," she said. During the service, however, Marcia realized, "This is a place where people want to tell the truth about Jesus and worship, and I'm all on board about that." She was sold and so were the kids. They asked to come back the next week. Thirty years later, Dick and Marcia are still faithful members and leaders at Cherry Hills.

The original Sunday format had Bob opening and closing the worship service and teaching adult Sunday School. Jim preached to a growing congregation of mostly young

families. Soloists and ensembles from Faith Presbyterian often performed, but within a few months, Dick Schultz was leading worship, frequently with Marcia and Bo's wife Gari Mitchell joining him.

The small staff of five didn't expect, nor particularly desire, a big church. "We thought 350-500 people, ultimately, would be a good size," said Jim. Instead, his vision for the church was spiritual. "We wanted people to fall in love with Christ. We'd preach about Christ, be faithful to the Scriptures and share the Gospel." Their vision worked, and people came. Lots of them. "We embraced the chaos and had a lot of fun," said Jim. But they also took seriously their commitment to Christ. From the beginning, Jim was the

"Jim and Bob...were very vulnerable. They were willing to stand before their whole congregation and talk about their shortcomings and their failures. They were authentic...and that then allowed the congregation to identify with their authenticity... so there was this notion that we were all in this together," said Dutch Franz, an early member and now the Executive Pastor of Cherry Hills.

stabilizing factor, and the standard was set high so that everything would be done correctly and ethically.

Day to Day

Inside the old converted farmhouse, Jim's office was in the living room—just inside the front door. A bedroom had been converted to Bob's office. Judy was in the kitchen and Everett and Susie worked from the basement. Sometimes on a slow day, they'd close the office in the afternoon and go to a movie.

While preparing his sermons, Jim would sometimes go behind the church and walk in the parking lot, studying, putting things together and memorizing. Other times he'd go into the cul-de-sac near his home with a wiffle ball and bat, hitting the ball and pacing for hours.

"We were all young," said Bo, "but not irresponsible; we got things done. Was it all done perfectly? No, but there wasn't much left to chance."

The youth, led by Doug Nuenke, met in the remodeled chicken coop in the backyard.

The Early Years

During its early years, Cherry Hills was a church where everyone knew each other. On Sunday mornings people would retrieve their nametags from the bulletin board. There were Family Fun Nights, and everyone took turns helping the custodians, Fitz and his wife Chick, clean the church. Formalities were addressed. In June the first Board of Elders was approved in a congregational meeting. Cherry Hills became part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), of which Jim had been a founder. Bob established a church motto; "We're all Bozos on this bus," which he borrowed from the late 1960's comedic

group Firesign Theater. He saw it as representative of Romans 3:23, "For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The church philosophy was, "Let's take Jesus seriously, and ourselves not so seriously."

The first Board of Elders: Bob Benson, Guy Boyer, Hal Goble, Gil Hill, Bob Howey and Dudley "Bo" Mitchell

"Jim and Bob...were very vulnerable. They were willing to stand before their whole congregation and talk about their shortcomings and their failures. They were authentic...and that then allowed the congregation to identify with their authenticity... so there was this notion that we were all in this together," said Dutch Franz, an early member and now the Executive Pastor of Cherry Hills.



First service:
March 7, 1982

**First membership
class of 200 people:**
May 16, 1982

**Moved to two worship
services, with adult
education between:**
October 3, 1982

**Congregational
meeting to discuss
expanding facility:**
November 21, 1982

**Board of Variance of
Cherry Hills Village
approves plans to
add a sanctuary to
the Village Heights
Elementary School:**
February 13, 1983

**Building in Faith capital
fundraising drive for
new property begins:**
August 7, 1983

**Membership as of
October 14, 1984:**
1050

The Vision

The Bozo mentality freed people to attempt ministries for which they had a passion but perhaps little formal preparation. Gene Kissinger, an oilman in the early 1980's, accepted Christ the second week he visited Cherry Hills. He told Jim in late 1983 he'd like to serve somehow, and Jim suggested the missions committee. Gene hadn't traveled much, had never met a missionary and knew very little about the Bible. But very quickly he felt he'd found where he belonged. Gene experienced the freedom to try, to invent and to learn.



From the beginning, the vision of Cherry Hills was to be a congregation mobilized in service to transform its community, elevate the urban poor and impact our nation and world—all in the name of Christ. "What makes the vision unique," he said, "is the distinct step of mobilizing the

congregation first. It still makes Cherry Hills unique. Often other churches are focused 'out there.' But we focus on mobilizing the congregation who will go do those things."

"Colleagues' jaws drop when they hear how much love and care gets directed our way, whether overseas or at home," writes Wes Tucker. He and wife Gerti have been Cherry Hills missionaries, primarily to Muslims, for 24 years.

Movement

In just 15 months, the congregation had tripled in size. The building had been expanded and two worship services were offered each Sunday—with adult education in between. The time had come to look for a new facility in order to meet the needs of the people God was bringing. Bo Mitchell had been watchful and found the right opportunity for Cherry Hills to expand. The congregation subsequently voted on the purchase and remodel of an elementary school located at Hampden and Colorado Boulevard in Cherry Hills Village. The Cherry Hills Village Board of Variance approved not only the purchase of the Village Heights Elementary School, but also a proposal to add a sanctuary. The funds were raised, and the young church started packing up to move.



The wood carving in the sanctuary designed to block the harsh glare behind the preacher was commissioned by Dan and Gay Boyd. It has traveled with the church to all three facilities and currently resides in the Ministry Center stairwell.

With the addition of a 1500-seat sanctuary, and a large fellowship hall for adult education, the new church would have plenty of room to grow. According to Bob Beltz, consultants were brought in, including Denver Seminary Professor Harold Westing,

to help get a handle on where the church was heading. "What you've created is a movement," Westing told them. "The time will come when it's more of an organization, and you'll have to adapt." Bob agreed that for the first five years, the church was indeed a movement, "...all grace and dumb luck." But during the next ten years at Colorado Boulevard, due to sheer size, the church would indeed become an organization.

**"It was almost 'Hang on!' it grew so fast."
—Bo Mitchell**



Colorado Boulevard - 1985

The first Sunday worship service at Colorado Boulevard held on September 9, 1985, drew more than 1000 people. Bob Beltz was handed a t-shirt that said, Same Bozos, New Bus. "...it was just as much fun, Christ-centered," Bo Mitchell recounts. "It just had a nicer, bigger, more congregation-friendly atmosphere. The business aspect was solid, which allowed the ministry aspect to be solid."

"I don't think the church really changed," Susie Miller said. "It grew, but the heart and soul of it was still right there. It got bigger. Everything got bigger." In fact, by 1987, Sunday morning attendance had expanded to more than 2500 and the church was holding three services, with adult education classes held at Denver Seminary and buses shuttling to and from three separate parking lots, coining the term Bus Bozos.

Bob's Bible study moved to Wednesday nights, and named Wednesday Night Live, it developed great community. "Bob told me he wanted a band for Wednesday nights that was like the Doobie Brothers meet Jesus," said Dick Schultz. So Dick gathered together the Holy Smoke Band. With the combination of Bob's gifted Bible teaching and 45 minutes of worship with a smokin' band, the class swelled to more than 1000 people, many of them singles who commuted from downtown Denver, Washington Park and the Tech Center.

Cherry Hills Christian

One dream fulfilled at the new site was the opening of Cherry Hills Christian School, something the staff had always envisioned. The church provided the school with encouragement and the classrooms that were used for Sunday School on the weekends. Susie Miller organized this offering of quality education with a focus on Christ. She had initially planned on 90 students,

and 90 there were. The school was fully accredited before the children took their first steps into the building.

The Purpose and Vision

As Christ continued to build his church, Jim's four-fold vision and five-fold purpose statements gave form and focus to a swelling congregation.

Easter at Fiddler's Green

Another opportunity for community came at Fiddler's Green Amphitheater on Easter Sunday, 1990, bringing together not only the entire congregation for one celebration, but also drawing in people who might not go to any church. Among those Dick Schultz invited to perform was Janet Mayhue, then a member of the urban ministry staff of Young Life. An estimated 6000 people came to worship that day.

The congregation reviewed a survey of Cherry Hills' ministry needs on November 15, 1990. The growing number of ministries and inadequate space strongly supported the need for new facilities. Two months later the congregation approved the Elders' recommended plan to relocate Cherry Hills Community Church to an area with plenty of room for expansion, in one of the fastest growing areas of the United States—Highlands Ranch.

Four-fold Vision

What keeps us energized is our vision to become:
A congregation mobilized in service to...
Transform our community
Elevate the urban poor and
Impact our nation and world
...for Christ.

Five-fold Purpose

We strive to exalt Christ in all we do.
We seek to bring people to Christ,
Bond them together and
Build them up in Christ.
And we send people into ministry for Christ.

A Trip to the Soviet Union

Meanwhile, the Holy Smoke Band and several vocalists were invited by Jim Gruen, then with Youth for Christ, to give Friendship Concerts in the Soviet Union and to distribute copies of the New Testament to anyone who wanted one. There wasn't much time and the team had to raise huge sums of money, so they held a benefit concert at Cherry Hills. Miraculously, every bit of the funding needed to transport 38 people, instruments and Bibles to Russia came in. But then two weeks before the trip, the Soviet Union collapsed.

Jim Gruen insisted that the team to Moscow was still going, and a couple of weeks later The Holy Smoke Band found itself singing on the steps of the Kremlin. Just moments before they'd watched a public announcement on TV, with their interpreter translating, "The Soviet Union is no more." Joining the team at another performance, Reverend Billy Kim from South Korea preached a sermon ending with a clear altar call, "If you want to receive Christ, stand." Janet Mayhue, one of the guest vocalists, recalled hearing an eerie silence and then "whoosh" as 6000 stadium seats closed at the same time: the Russian people were rising

for Christ. Lance Garrett continued the story, "I remember Billy saying, 'You all just stood up, but let me explain what I invited you to do. If you want to have Christ in your heart, remain standing. If you didn't understand what I meant, it's okay. You can sit back down.' I think he was taken aback: it looked like the entire audience was standing. After he explained it the second time, nobody sat down. I think our jaws were on the ground, wondering what had just happened. It was quite an impact."

Over the ten days of the trip, the team distributed 100,000 New Testaments translated into the Russian language.



Missions & Outreach

In 1988, the Missions department offered its first Discover the World (DTW) class, a program built upon the World Vision model consisting of training followed by short-term mission trip opportunities. DTW had become the critical turning point in mobilizing thousands of people for service, with the Holy Smoke Band's trip to Russia invigorating the congregation's interest in mission-trips.

Our Missions & Outreach Department sends 15-20 short-term mission teams into the field every year and has hundreds of missionaries throughout the world. Cherry Hills developed a model by which a team at home supports and encourages a global outreach team serving elsewhere. Some of the at-home teams, the Czech Initiative, Embrace Israel and Imagine India for example, have grown out of Discover the World short-term trips.

Rise Up and Shine

Not long after arriving safely home, the band performed for the Rise Up and Shine Building Fund campaign dinner held at the Colorado Convention Center, raising \$7.5 million toward the new Highlands Ranch location.

Marcia Schultz remembers the second decade of Cherry Hills as cutting edge. "We were trying to be on the cutting edge of different things: music, technology, outreach, children's ministry, youth ministry. We were asking who was doing what in the world that was new and effective, helping people come to Christ and stay with him."

During the Colorado Boulevard years, the Music Department hosted numerous concerts with national talent such as Noel Paul Stookey, Michael Card, Larnell Harris, John Michael Talbot and Rich Mullins & Friends. Often these artists would return on Sunday morning and

join the church's amazing talent, with Lance Garrett on the piano, Kerry Conner, Keith and Perri Baxter, and so many others.

Taking Care of Business

Dutch and Leslie Franz joined Cherry Hills in 1982 with the second membership class. With his background in banking, Dutch was asked to sit on the Board of Elders in 1986 and four years later was hired as the Executive Pastor. "As we began looking to relocate, there were a couple of different things that needed to be done. First of all, we were looking at the operations of the church. The organization and the financial ends of the church needed to be modified, if you will, in order to meet the lender requirements necessary to acquire land and construct buildings," Dutch said. "The second was to be more or less the point person between the staff and board and congregation as we began this journey of seeking to identify and acquire land, and then develop the plans for what kind of building we would have eventually."

Exerting a conservative financial view of stewardship set by Jim and the Elder board, the church paid cash raised by the congregation through



Standing on our current day Worship Center Stage.

the Rise Up and Shine fundraising campaign. And when it came time to build, the church had enough cash in hand to keep debt payments low. "Jim has set a great tone in that regard of never pushing the board to take on excessive debt, but embracing the board's guidance," said Dutch.

Freedom

Pastor Mike Anderson was hired in 1992 to help Dick Savidge with the duties of the Counseling and Pastoral Care Department. After three years of addressing the needs of hurting and needy people, Mike wanted to form a department that would deal proactively with marriages and families. He would see clearly his senior pastor's style of granting staff freedom and grace to venture wherever Christ was leading them. "Jim has always given us his support to hire the best person we can, and then unencumber them, cut them loose to go do what Jesus and his spirit are leading them to do," Mike said.

The Choir Sings

An entrepreneur, Lance Garrett had begun hearing about a new church called Cherry Hills Community and decided to visit. He knew the choir director personally and agreed to take over for the accompanist who was ready to step down. Lance performed the offertory pieces, concerts and special events and later joined the staff full time.

"The first two Christmas programs were directed by Lavetta McCune and had much more to do with drama than they did with choir performance," says Lance Garrett, "but in 1997 I took Lavetta's concept and changed it to music with some dramatic narration to tie it together. I wanted it to be more of a Norman Rockwell Christmas focused on taking people to the experiences they had growing up and what Christmas meant, to be not only a gift-giving time but also a time spent at church." Lance wanted it to be inspirational with music that would be familiar and the sights and sounds of carolers as they came up the walk, stepping into the lobby with the smell of real Christmas trees.

Lance's vision for Christmas had become a reality because the choir had finally found its voice. At a time when churches were more interested in contemporary worship, Lance had come on staff when there wasn't

much interest in a choir. All along it had vacillated between 20 and 70 singers. Lance had by then become Director of Music. In the spring of 1997, Lance recalled, the time had come for serious attention to the choir and he immediately thought of his childhood friend, Sean Spurr, who had been having success in his work with choirs in California. Within a year, the choir had grown from 70 to 150, and to 200 the year after. Soon the Christmas program joined Christmas Eve and Easter at Fiddler's Green as Cherry Hills' most popular events.

Breaking Ground – Highlands Ranch

On June 12, 1994, at the Ground Breaking Ceremony of the Highlands Ranch property, Jim spoke of Christ's strong commitment to building his church. The first phase of building was called the "beach head," emphasizing the ministry priorities of the Worship Center; educational space for the Children's Sunday School; Cherry Hills Christian School, which now included a middle school; and expanded parking. With options on additional land, there would be room for the church to grow in order to meet the needs of everyone God might bring in the future. When the new street was laid in front of the church, Jim Dixon was invited to name it. He chose Grace Boulevard.



Grace Boulevard - 1995

With nearly 50 interns, we've provided over a \$1.5 million worth of free counseling, since I started here in 2000." –Carson Miles, Pastor of Counseling and Pastoral Care

Knowing that some of the congregation would ultimately decide not to follow the church to Highlands Ranch, Jim and the leadership team decided to plant Greenwood Community Church in Greenwood Village. Many members of Cherry Hills moved there with Tom Melton. Others chose to stay put and attend Colorado Community Church, led by Mark Brewer, which had purchased the Colorado Boulevard property from Cherry Hills.

The church leadership also knew its demographic would change in the far southern suburbs, but the Board of Elders and leadership had faith in God's prompting to build the facility first and the people would come. When the church opened its new doors on July 30, 1995, thousands of people attended worship, many of them new to Cherry Hills.

Inklings

Jim and Barb Dixon had seen bookstores in the larger churches they'd visited over the years, and they envisioned one for the new facility on Grace Boulevard. Rusty and Jerry Miller followed Jim and Bob from Faith Presbyterian to Cherry Hills in 1982, and the pastors had likewise visited the Millers' bookstore not far from Denver Seminary. "They asked us to help them set up and operate a full-service Christian bookstore called Inklings, named after a gathering of authors including J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis," Rusty says. "All the proceeds from our sales go directly to support church ministry."

Bob's Departure

After teaching his series Get Your Kicks on Route 66, a survey through all 66 books of the Bible in 66 weeks, Pastor Bob Beltz left Cherry Hills in June of 1997, having accepted a senior pastor position in California. Including their years at Faith Presbyterian in Aurora, Jim Dixon and Bob Beltz had ministered together for nearly 25 years.

Franklin Graham

For us, the tragedy of Columbine on April 20, 1999, was too close to home. Several of our own high school students were in the building during the massacre, and alongside them we tried to make sense of it, make sense of life. Steve McConaghie was the Student Ministries Director at that time. "Bringing some sense of security, or love, or safety for them was first priority," he said. "The Franklin Graham Sunday brought a unique feeling and response to the tragedy. There was a very clear sense of God's anointing on him, because believers have something that the rest of the world doesn't have. We have hope."

Franklin Graham preached at Cherry Hills soon after the Columbine tragedy. "There was a very clear sense of God's anointing on him because believers have something that the rest of the world doesn't have. We have hope." –Steve McConaghie

Franklin talked about hope in Christ, a very simple message, and there was a profound response that day." Steve remembers the multitude of people that came that day, the number of

people that went forward, the people that collected outside and went in the tents, and the discussions that happened. "I felt as though I saw God anoint someone and their message that day, and it was very powerful."

Communications

By 1999, the church needed to communicate to thousands in a technologically sophisticated world, so Jim and Dutch created the Communications Department and hired Rebecca Johnson, then on the communications staff with the Chicago Zoo, to lead it. "When they created the position," Rebecca says, "they wanted a perspective of reaching the community and continuing to grow. We wanted to make sure we weren't just taking care of our congregation, but that we were also communicating opportunities that would



Palm Sunday children's parade

attract people and make them aware that there was a church here that might become their church home." The Communications Department, now with nine staff members, has been building technology-based avenues ever since, including three separate iterations of the website; weekly email blasts; online registration, which changed the face of how large events would be handled, and much, much more. The church has joined the social media age with both Twitter and Facebook accounts.



The New Millennium - 2000

“Our focus,” says Lance Garrett, “was always to produce something from Sunday to Sunday, and from Christmas to Easter, that was going to be the talk of the town. People would say, ‘That’s where you want to go. You ought to check this place out.’ And we did that on purpose. We wanted to be the spectacle that just drew people in, to get them in the door and under the tutelage of Jim Dixon.”

Children and Youth

Christ continued to grow Cherry Hills, developing the changes in procedures and administration required to insure the church could concentrate on the important things, like children. Sheila Robinson was hired as Director of Children’s Ministry in March of 2000, a year after the opening of the Ministry Center,

a church expansion that produced more classrooms for both Sunday School and Cherry Hills Christian. The church envisioned, “A place that loves kids; a place kids love,” and that vision became Grace Place, with kids, “Growing from the inside, like a tree.”

One unique aspect of Grace Place volunteers is the number of men who volunteer to teach Sunday School. A Promise Keepers event had inspired many of them to reconnect with their families—to the benefit of all families at Cherry Hills.

In 2005, Sheila and her team transitioned to a large group/ small group ministry philosophy. The Grace Place team planned and implemented The Treehouse, now one of the focal points of Cherry Hills’ high tech children’s

programs. “At that time, the small gym was filled with 3-year-olds,” Sheila says. “We were able to open up the small gym and build a tree house, actually an interactive, multi-media children’s theatre.”

Like the youth with whom they work, the Liquid student ministry staff continues to change and grow. The Colorado Boulevard days found our youth participating in K-Life, which the church supported financially. Later the kids came back to campus, thriving under the variety of leadership that directed them. Today the preteens, junior high and high school students continue to be disciplined by caring adults and peers, mobilizing them to serve and providing various opportunities for community and relationships. They worship together on Sunday mornings with a band of their own. They hold events during the

“I’ll never forget [the Sunday after] 9/11. Jim was stuck in Scotland. Dave Meserve stepped up and did the sermon. What Dave had to say was what we needed to hear that day. It was amazing...grace....”
 –Carson Miles, Pastor of Counseling and Pastoral Care

year such as Super Kids Sports Kamp, go on retreats and to summer camp.

Grace Place and Liquid have merged to become Family Ministry, which is focused on connecting children and parents in spiritual development from birth through high school using the tagline *Find it here; Bring it home*. The centerpiece of this church-to-home connection is Celebrations of Faith, a series of classes centered on spiritual milestones in the lives of parents and children.

40 Days of Purpose

Another church-wide event that changed the landscape of Cherry Hills in 2005 was a congregational shared-study called *40 Days of Purpose*, based on the book and series developed by Pastor Rick Warren and Saddleback Church in Southern California. Every department in the church stopped what they were teaching and studied this one topic together for 40 days. The 200 preexisting small groups were encouraged to quit meeting during that period, and new church, neighborhood, or workplace-based

groups were formed, nearly seven hundred of them, many of them continuing to meet ever



May 22, 2005, groundbreaking day for the Atrium and The Chapel. People wrote personal prayers on wooden stakes driven into the ground as a blessing on the construction site.

since. “We learned...that people like things they can get their arms around...that have a beginning and an end,” says Pastor of Community Life Mark Shupe. “There was power and synergy by bringing everybody together to focus on one thing at one time. I’ve always appreciated that we’re a church not afraid to try things that haven’t been done before,” he says about the culminating event of 40 Days of Purpose. “One of my fun memories is seeing people come together and riding the light rail down to the Pepsi Center.” Cherry Hills congregated with its urban church partners for Celebration Sunday at the Pepsi Center on October 23.

Mayor’s Project

In 2006, Jim spoke to the congregation about his meetings with the Mayor of Denver, John Hickenlooper, explaining the mayor’s desire to end

homelessness in Denver over the next 10 years and his own desire to come alongside the mayor in this endeavor. The plan was to engage the faith-based community in providing mentoring groups that would come alongside a family and mentor them for a 6-month term. The Denver Rescue Mission handled the administration. That Sunday morning, 140 people agreed to attend the information and training nights, and more than a dozen groups proceeded from there with mentoring a homeless family, many continuing the relationship after their commitment was finished.

Holy Space

Creating holy space for worship has long been at the forefront of Cherry Hills Community Church history with so much time and energy spent moving, expanding a facility or building a new one. In the early 2000s, funds were raised for a variety of projects: The Chapel and the Atrium, to purchase the land options surrounding the church, and to complete the Ministry Center and Worship Center Balcony.

The Chapel and the Atrium were constructed simultaneously in 2006. The Chapel combines an old world feel with the current, more traditional appearance of the church





During the summer of 2008, thousands walked through World Vision's step into Africa: the AIDS crisis – an interactive exhibit that featured an audio tour, mesmerizing photographs and four stories of children affected by AIDS.

facility, and is used for weddings, memorials and more intimate worship services. It stands alone with landmark architecture featuring native Colorado stone, rich cherry wood and masterfully designed stained glass windows. The Atrium, including the Commons, Wild Blue Coffee, and the mezzanine with the library and conference rooms was opened on October 31, 2007.

Love In Action

Cherry Hills had successfully reached into the city of Denver and the world at large, but what about Highlands Ranch, our own backyard in the suburbs? To find out, representatives from the Small Group and Communications Departments met with the Highlands Ranch Community Association.



Together the two organizations brainstormed what kinds of things the church could do: Help homeowners with houses in disrepair to bring them up to code. Clean the streets and work on backcountry trail systems. Douglas County Schools, hurt by budget cuts, identified a wide number of projects.

Cherry Hills responded with a church-wide, community event held on Sunday afternoon, April 25, 2010. More than 2500 church volunteers, identified by their Love in Action t-shirts, used 200 gallons of paint, repaired 15 homes, worked on 26 schools, beautified 4 recreation centers, fed 200 Douglas County officers and 15 Highlands Ranch firefighters, gathered 100,000 pounds of items

for electronic recycling, covered 70+ miles of street cleaning and prayer walking, and the list goes on.

In a debriefing, one of the Douglas County school leaders said, "To be honest, we were just really surprised when you guys actually showed up. A lot of people say they'll do things that don't come to fruition."

In the City

Since the very beginning, Cherry Hills' involvement in the city has been relational and church-based. Cherry Hills partners with New Life in Christ, Agape, Anchor of Hope, His Love Fellowship and Scum of the Earth church. There are also 16 Ministry Partners including Joshua Station, Whiz Kids, Restoration Outreach and

the Denver Rescue Mission. "If we didn't support our urban partners," says Director of City Ministry Gary Sokol, "we'd be missing the boat. They live in the community. They do it 24/7. If we're going to make an impact, we need to impact urban churches."

Pastor Jack LaPietra of New Life in Christ gives one example of how this plays out: "Our church has a small business advisory board. Of the five people on the board, three are members of Cherry Hills and some have been on board for 10-15 years. They have run with us long distance." Jack attributes such longevity to the active dialogue between the leadership at Cherry Hills and its various pastors in the city, a relationship sustained by Jim Dixon. There is also the continual emphasis from the 4-fold vision of mobilizing the congregation to elevate the urban poor. "I'm not sure any other suburban church has the sort of congregational involvement with the urban poor that Cherry

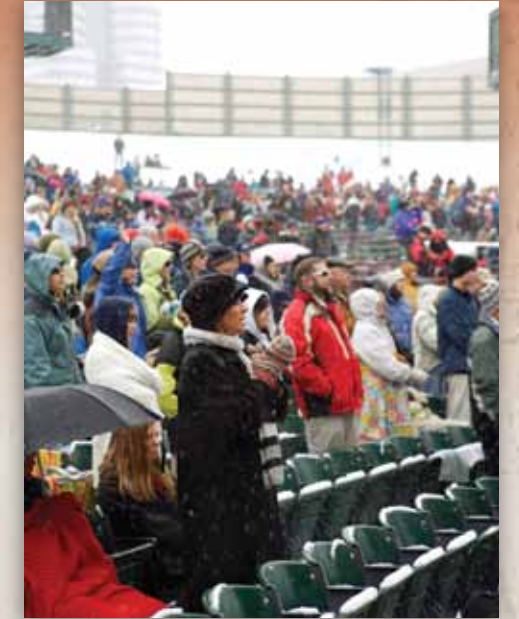
Hills does," says Jack. "When you ask [in the city] who's volunteering, often it's Cherry Hills Community Church that's in the main."

The Institute at Cherry Hills

Dr. Blake LaMunyon became the Pastor of Evangelism in August 2008, and although his job description was largely unformed, he recreated the Wednesday night worship services, now called Midpoint. About the same time, Jim Dixon was in California when he met authors, speakers and internationally known apologists Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg, whom Blake greatly respected.

Lee had written a note to Jim saying that his family was moving to Colorado and asking if there was anything he could do for Cherry Hills. Out of these divine connections came The Institute at Cherry Hills, an evangelism and apologetics ministry. Blake would

serve as co-director of The Institute alongside Strobel, Mittelberg, and eventually another apologist, their friend Garry Poole. "It was something only God could have envisioned," said Blake. The purpose of The Institute would be to motivate, train and equip Christians at Cherry Hills to naturally and effectively



In the Easter 2007 snowstorm, 400 people huddled together at Fiddler's Green. "Those who were there had come to worship. It was, 'Pressure's off! Let's just celebrate Christ being risen.'" –Nathan Johnson, Director of the WorshipExperienceTeam

share the message of Christ. Through innovative outreach strategies, Cherry Hills hopes to become a model for churches around the nation, to fuel the fire for sharing Christ, and to help believers understand what it is that they believe and why they believe it.

Jim Dixon says, "In the course of our church history, The Institute really was one of the great things we saw God do. We were excited about launching it at Cherry Hills and about the focus on evangelism and apologetics." Establishing The Institute, Blake believes, is a step toward a best Cherry Hills chapter yet to be written.



Looking Ahead

Cherry Hills is positioned for a bright future, with faithfulness to Christ and Scripture, and with the freedom to respond to the opportunities God brings.

The scale of Cherry Hills is often overwhelming, but the staff works to shrink the church by helping connect people through a network of small groups. Pastor Mark Shupe pinpoints the typical Highlands Ranch fast growing demographic: two-income families with kids involved in lots of activities. People have many acquaintances, but few deep friendships. “It seems like a church ought to offer a place to really connect and build bonds and relationships where growth and life-change can take place, and where people can be formed more in the image and likeness of Christ,” he says. “I think there’s a role that groups and community play in that process.” Volunteering and small groups pull people at Cherry Hills into the opportunity for deeper relationships.

The Forefront of Education

After 27 years, Cherry Hills Christian still honors Christ by teaching, encouraging, training and grounding students in God’s truth within a dynamic, academic environment.

The school has placed cutting edge technology in every classroom in the form of Promethean interactive whiteboards, and during the 2012-13 school year, they will implement a “One-to-One” iPad program in grades one through eight. The iPads will facilitate broader content knowledge and technical skills.

Worship

The Worship Center was originally built to seat 2500 people, with another 1000 seats added during the expansion in 2000. It houses state-of-the-art equipment that supports carefully produced worship

services every week and special programs throughout the year.

“But the real goal for the Worship Center is for a wide, diverse group of people to have some sort of spiritual connection in worship,” says current director Nathan Johnson. He and his WorshipExperienceTeam work to help whomever is preaching to connect with the congregation in multiple ways, creatively employing a diverse worship toolbox that includes music, video, drama, dance and lighting. “We keep a high standard of excellence,” said Nathan, “but the Bozos concept is alive in the sense of grace in high expectations.”

Christmas at the Ranch, now a magnificent, integrated production, provides an excellent opportunity for people to bring family, neighbors and friends. It is also an incubator and creative generator for the rest of the year. According to Nathan, in December 2011, the WorshipExperienceTeam produced four Christmas at the Ranch concerts, ten regular services in The Chapel and Worship Center, and three Christmas Eve services for a total combined attendance in the range of 36,000 people.

Nathan Johnson believes our way of worship will develop and change.

“Worship is founded on communicating God’s timeless truth in today’s language. In Scripture we’re admonished to sing a new song.”

Who Do We Want to Be?

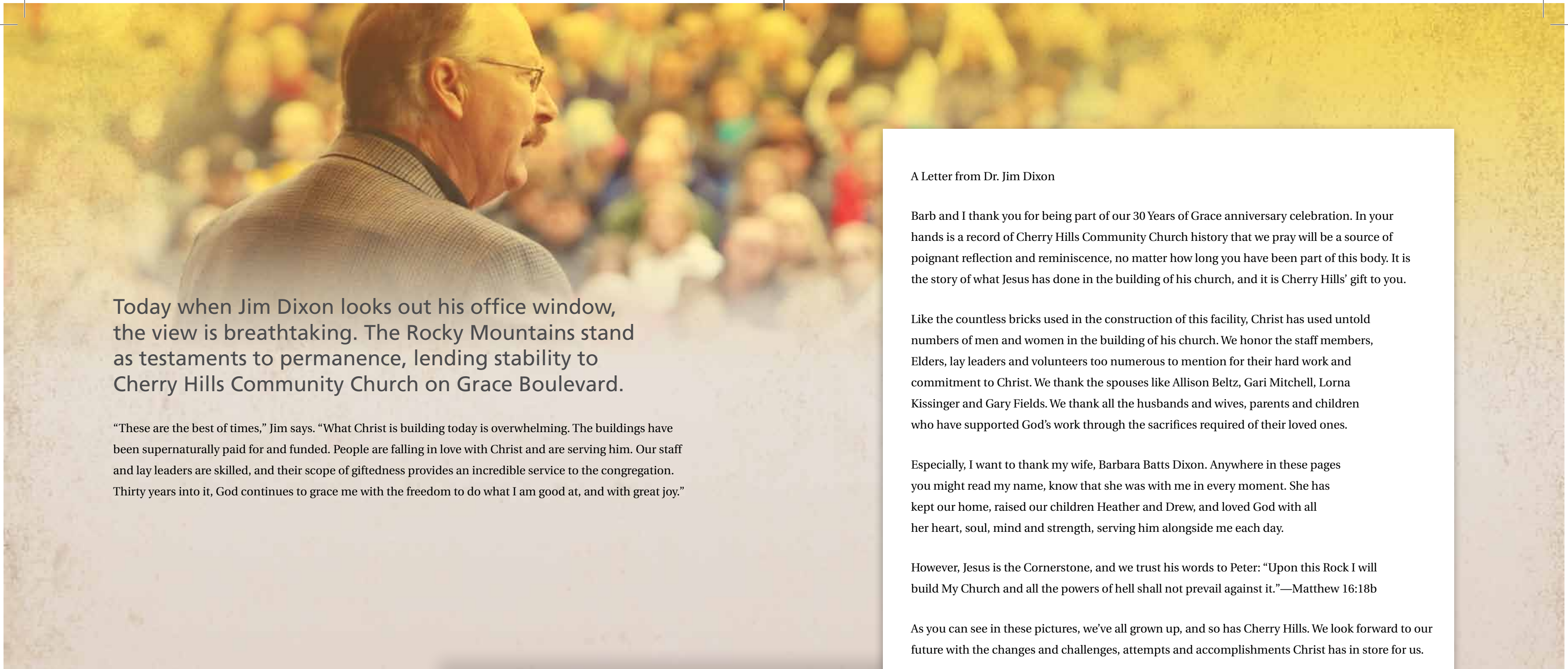
And Steve McConaghie, Pastor of Congregational Life, says: “We have a history, legacy, strong reputation and opportunity. Where are we going to go from here, and what is our strategy? The 5-fold purpose and 4-fold vision are clear. We have a smorgasbord of resources. Will we intentionally choose to do some things well? Differentiate to say who we are? Create ministry emphasis? We’re in a position few churches are. We’re positioned to say, ‘Who do we want to be?’”

A thread has run through the 30 years of history at Cherry Hills Community Church: a sense of simply being faithful to the call. “There is so much people can say about the peaks and valleys and relocation, all the high points,” Rebecca Johnson says, “but I think what has gotten Cherry Hills to where it is now is that faithfulness

of putting one foot in front of the other. Honestly, it goes back to the calling of the church and keeping Christ as the center. It’s the one thing that you can lose in all the confetti, but that is what’s worth celebrating, and that is what’s going to carry the church forward through whatever purpose God has for its future.”

There is no business model that can substantiate the success and growth experienced on Orchard Road, Colorado Boulevard and even now on Grace Boulevard—the story that is Cherry Hills Community Church. “We can’t make anyone come to this church, or cause them to give: that is led by the movement of the Spirit,” Dutch Franz says. “Our job is, and will be, to serve those who come, and to use the resources that God has given us for the benefit of our church family and for the benefit of the King.”





Today when Jim Dixon looks out his office window, the view is breathtaking. The Rocky Mountains stand as testaments to permanence, lending stability to Cherry Hills Community Church on Grace Boulevard.

“These are the best of times,” Jim says. “What Christ is building today is overwhelming. The buildings have been supernaturally paid for and funded. People are falling in love with Christ and are serving him. Our staff and lay leaders are skilled, and their scope of giftedness provides an incredible service to the congregation. Thirty years into it, God continues to grace me with the freedom to do what I am good at, and with great joy.”

A Letter from Dr. Jim Dixon

Barb and I thank you for being part of our 30 Years of Grace anniversary celebration. In your hands is a record of Cherry Hills Community Church history that we pray will be a source of poignant reflection and reminiscence, no matter how long you have been part of this body. It is the story of what Jesus has done in the building of his church, and it is Cherry Hills' gift to you.

Like the countless bricks used in the construction of this facility, Christ has used untold numbers of men and women in the building of his church. We honor the staff members, Elders, lay leaders and volunteers too numerous to mention for their hard work and commitment to Christ. We thank the spouses like Allison Beltz, Gari Mitchell, Lorna Kissinger and Gary Fields. We thank all the husbands and wives, parents and children who have supported God's work through the sacrifices required of their loved ones.

Especially, I want to thank my wife, Barbara Batts Dixon. Anywhere in these pages you might read my name, know that she was with me in every moment. She has kept our home, raised our children Heather and Drew, and loved God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength, serving him alongside me each day.

However, Jesus is the Cornerstone, and we trust his words to Peter: “Upon this Rock I will build My Church and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.”—Matthew 16:18b

As you can see in these pictures, we've all grown up, and so has Cherry Hills. We look forward to our future with the changes and challenges, attempts and accomplishments Christ has in store for us.

We thank God for you, and look forward to the journey.

Serving Christ with you,



Jim Dixon





1982-2012
Cherry Hills
Community Church
30th Anniversary