

Churches Helping Churches *continued from front page*

“When we heard the news our hearts were touched and we put ourselves in their shoes and thought about what that might be like if it was us,” added Grace assistant pastor Mark Brown.

Pense has been the Pastor at the Vernonia Foursquare Church for 13 years after moving from St. Helens with his wife Mary Lou. “One of the reasons we came here was because this church was vacant and they needed a pastor,” says Pense. “I left my job as head custodian at Scappoose High School and came here and went to work for the City of Vernonia in their Public Works Department, which put me even more in touch with the community, especially after the flood in 2007 and all the clean-up.”

According to Pense, the Foursquare Church has been meeting in their current location for approximately 35 years. The building dates back to 1925 and has been home to numerous businesses over the years. Following the flood in 2007, the church served as the Head Start classroom during the weeks after that building was damaged.

Pense says he was surprised and somewhat shocked when he was told the District did not plan to invest any more money in the building, but he understands the decision.

“In a way I’m relieved and this was a necessary decision,” says Pense, “because we could have just continued on, spending money or we might have had something disastrous happen.”

Pense says the church will be taking some of their equipment with them when they move to the Grace Chapel, but are planning to liquidate the contents of the building through a community sale, beginning on the Saturday before Easter.

With just three weeks to make the move, Pense has begun emptying closets, sorting through boxes that have been in the building for decades, and inventorying what the current building holds, deciding what can go with them when they move, and what they need to get rid of.



A failing foundation, sagging roof, and other structural issues led the Foursquare District Supervisor to decide the Vernonia congregation needed to abandon their building on Madison Avenue.



After the building is empty it will be demolished and the lot, along with the empty lot next door that belongs to the church, will be sold. “The Foursquare District’s thought is to get these lots back onto the City’s tax rolls,” says Pense, “which would not be a bad thing, considering how many lots the City lost

after the 2007 flood.”

Pense describes his small congregation as, “... a strong group in their commitment to one another and in being faithful to the church with their tithes and offerings.” Pense says his group also supports numerous missions around the world.

“Our churches have seen eye-to-eye on that purpose of mission outside ourselves and into the community and trying to reach people who are hurting and need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ,” said McCallum about Grace Family Fellowship and Pense’s Foursquare Church.

This is not the first time that the Grace Family Fellowship Church has responded to a need at the Foursquare Church. When Pense’s wife Mary Lou passed away on June 30, 2015, McCallum announced her passing from the pulpit the following Sunday and then led 99 of his followers as they walked over to support Pense and worship with his congregation in their church. “It was very moving,” says Pense.

Pense noted that following that event the two churches came together to help paint the Vernonia Community Learning Center. “It started something that has mobilized into something more,” says Pense.

“We want to work together for the common goal of reaching people with the love of Jesus Christ,” added McCallum, “and not worrying about competing with one another but doing what the Lord told us to do, help our brother in his time of need. We can accomplish so much more working together than we can on our own.”

While Pense appears disappointed in the Foursquare Church District’s decision to not invest in the current building, he says he does not feel like his congregation has been abandoned by the District. He says the Supervisor spent time visiting potential locations that the church could relocate to, and is interested in helping them find a permanent home. “It’s just so wonderful that we have a place to go to,” says Pense. “The place where we meet has been taken away and we needed a safe place... a place where we can have time to heal. Right now I think we have a very suitable place and hopefully our congregations will complement each other.”

Pastor Carl Pense and the Vernonia Foursquare Church will be meeting at 10:30 on Sunday mornings at the Grace Chapel, 358 A Street, will hold Ladies Group at 5:30 on Thursdays, and Bible Study at 6:30 on Thursdays.

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