

The Orchard a united methodist congregation



January 2008

the planting of the orchard

In June 1998, Bryan and Wendy Collier came to Tupelo to begin a new work for The United Methodist Church. This, yet-to-be-named-work began, as 24 people gathered at The Tupelo Furniture Market and dreamed about a community of faith of a different kind. What follows is a timeline of major milestones in the life of the people called The Orchard. It is a record of God's faithfulness and the fruitfulness of a community of faith that answered God's call.

June 1998

Bryan and Wendy Collier appointed to start new United Methodist Church (UMC) in west Tupelo

7th Bryan and Wendy meet with Core Group to cast Vision, Mission and Core Values. Also focused on a name.

Bryan preached in local UM congregations asking for 2 missional families and prayer support.

July 1998

Identified and began training Small Group Leaders; Organized first groups for study, prayer and fellowship

Met every other week for Core Group Fellowship

Organized into Launch Teams: Hospitality; Children's Ministry; Advertising; Worship Arts; Music; Printed Materials; Community and Come Level Events; Visitor Follow Up; Youth Ministry; Facility Setup; Sound and Projection.

August 1998

Began search for Worship Leader.

Identified Worship Space for Launch; Building E of the Mississippi Complex of the Tupelo Furniture Market.

16th First Come Level Event held at Thomas Street School Gymnasium —a coffee house with Eddie Willis as a guest musician.

September 1998

Hired Worship Leader for weekends only —Harris Magruder.

27th Held first preview service at Thomas Street Elementary School Gym.

Held every other week preview services in Thomas Street School Gymnasium

31st Second Come Level Event—Fall Festival free to the community.

November 1998

Had Core Group Thanksgiving Meal with 80 people.

December 1998

December 6th, Launch Day!

256 in Attendance

January 1999

Moved into office space at 1921 McCullough Blvd, Tupelo.

Began Get Revived On Wednesday (GROW) Classes for entire church. Short-term classes for Growing Deep or Branching Out.

February 1999

Began our Nomadic Journey of moving out of the Furniture Market to alternative locations during the market months of February and August. This February we moved back to Thomas Street Gym, but in August and beyond we moved to the Ramada Inn Convention Center.

April 1999

Hired 20 hour-a-week Children's Minister—Sara Berry

At Easter worship attendance topped 300 (323) for the first time

June of 1999

Hired Eddie Willis as the Summer Youth Worker

August 1999

The first Family Vacation Bible School; for the entire family is held at the Trace Inn Convention Center.

October 1999

Purchased 20 acres of land on main thoroughfare on west side of Tupelo.

December 1999

Ended the Year averaging 260 in worship

January 2000

Attendance topped 400 for the first time (411 and 462 back to back weeks)

March 2000

Began Prep Time (similar to Sunday School) hour before Worship Celebration for children's education and adult small groups.

April 2000

Wendy Collier replaces Sara Berry as part-time Children's Minister.

Easter attendance topped 600 (637).

First Outdoor Service on the Future Building Site.

June of 2000

Hired Eddie Willis as second full-time pastor at The Orchard with responsibilities in Worship and Youth.

October 2000

Leased old Warehouse Liquidator's Building for 3 years for worship and as a base for ministry. Began renovations for a November occupation. Held a prayer walk on The Orchard's Future Site.

November 2000

Began worshipping in the renovated Warehouse Liquidator's building. (November 5th) Topped 500 in worship (553) for the first time. Building Research Team Organizes to begin visiting other church sites and praying for direction for future building.

December 2000

Moved offices to Warehouse Liquidator's location. Ended Year Averaging 434 in worship

February 2001

Topped 600 in worship in back-to-back weeks (619 and 620).

March 2001

Hired Chanda Cossitt full time to work in ministry to older children and as Minister of Connections.

April 2001

Gave away 5000 packets of seed at Home Depot and Lowe's for an Easter Outreach. (each packet had our name and worship time on it). 904 in attendance for Easter

May 2001

Launched Sunday evening service at 5:00 p.m. Identical to morning service targeting shift workers and "night" people.

July 2001

10 members Branch Out to Uganda in 14 day mission to orphanage.

Discontinued Prep-Time in favor of boosting small group ministry. Made commitment to identify and train 20 new small group leaders and launch their groups by September 1.

August 2001

15 members Branch Out to Ecuador in a 12 day mission to the seminary and orphanage near Quito.

Train 30 new small group leaders in a retreat setting at Camp Lake Stephens.

Topped 700 in average attendance for the first time in the history of The Orchard.

September 2001

September 16th new high attendance of 954 following the terrorist attacks on The World Trade Center and Pentagon of September 11th.

September 16th discontinued evening service due to lack of reaching target audience.

Launched 22 new small groups after identifying, training and deploying leaders to begin and sustain these groups.

14 adults Branch Out to Adult Mountain T.O.P. weekend in the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee.

October 2001

Selected Pryor and Morrow, Rudd Robison as architects for research and design of The Orchard's first structures.

November 2001

Began search for an additional pastor to work in areas of teaching, congregational care, and administration.

Began search for a full-time director of children's ministries.

December 2001

Average worship attendance for the year: 755

January 2002

Launched Early Edition worship service at 8:30 a.m.

February 2002

Purchased two acres of property adjacent to The Orchard's future building site, bringing Orchard Land total to 22 acres.

March 2002

Began construction inside the warehouse on 5 additional rooms for children and staff expansion. Intend to be open for Easter March 31st. Opened on Easter Sunday!

Hired Joel Hawkins as Pastor to Children and Families. Began his duties June 10th.

March 31st Easter Sunday attendance 1,417!

April 2002

Architects finish first renderings of profile view and master plan for Orchard's future buildings.

June 2002

23rd, in a joint meeting of the Building Team and Leadership Team heard final proposal for Master Plan of The Orchard from Pryor and Morrow and accepted it. Made plans to reveal to the congregation at December 8th Birthday service.

September 2002

Hired Amy McGraw as Creative Director.

Gathering of the entire leadership of the church to consider a plan to build rather than rent an additional adjacent facility and renovate. Leadership also covenanted together to pray for 2 weeks about God's leading.

Meeting 2 weeks later, Leadership fully endorsed the plan to build rather than renovate additional space. Unanimously decided to ask the congregation through a listening and praying process to begin on our December 8th birthday.

October 2002

Paid off land! Burned note at outdoor service October 13th.

November 2002

Had 300 volunteers to feed the hungry of Tupelo a Thanksgiving meal (24th). Not many hungry showed up so donated the food to Salvation Army who fed them the next day!

December 2002

8th: 4th Birthday Party at a.m. services.

8th: Unveiling of Building Plans at special evening service called Celebration Night: Celebrating what God has done, is doing and will do.

This month was designated as a month of prayer about the building program.

24th: First Christmas Eve Service. Planned for 200 had over 700 in attendance!

Ended year averaging 856 persons in worship on Sunday mornings.

January 2003

Held two "town hall" type meetings to let congregation ask questions about the building plans. Led by Building Team and Architects

This month's emphasis for the building program was planning (added to our praying).

February 2003

Building Program culminated in Destination Night on February 7th. This program was highlighted by special guest speaker, Billy Hybels the founding and Senior Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, in Chicago, Illinois. At the end of the program, the Orchard family pledged 1.5 million dollars over the next 3 years to assist in building a permanent home for The Orchard. February 8th; met with Architect and small leadership group to talk about next steps. Finance team began working on financing; Selected group begins interviewing contractors to bring a recommendation to the Building Team and eventually the Leadership Team.

March 2003

16th: approved Sanderson Construction as Contractor to begin negotiations with Pryor and Morrow Architects on our behalf.

26th: hired Chris Carter as our Growing Deep (Small Groups and Discipleship) Pastor. Chris, Tonya and Brady arrive in Tupelo by June 1.

April 2003

20th Easter!: new attendance record 1,817!

May 2003

Partnered with BancorpSouth in financing the construction of The Orchard's first permanent structure.

September 2003

7th: Groundbreaking! Projected 12-14 month completion time

14th: Launched new small group emphasis under the Leadership of Chris Carter. Had over 800 people in participate in small groups in fall of 2003

November 2003

16th: Eddie Willis announced that he is leaving The Orchard to explore new avenues of ministry.

December 2003

7th: 5th Birthday celebrated with a party! Christmas Eve Service attended by over 850 people for Communion, Candlelight and Carols. Closed the year averaging 1060 in worship on Sunday Mornings

January 2004

Poured the slab for The Orchard's Phase 1 Began search for Youth Minister replacements. Announced the hiring of Will Rambo (begin April 1) as the Minister to Senior High Students and families and Pat Ward as the Minister to Junior High Students and families (begins May 25)

February 2004

Growing Deep Pastor, Chris Carter announced that he was leaving to plant a church in the Franklin, Tennessee area called The Orchard: A Church of the Cross Began search for replacement Began the search for a Part-time Administrator/ Executive Pastor.

April 2004

Announced the hiring of Scott Lees as the Growing Deep Pastor at The Orchard. Scott and Kristen arrive July 1.

1st: Will Rambo arrives and begins work

11th: Easter attendance: 2000!

May 2004

Pat Ward begins as Minister to Junior High Students and Parents.

Jay Stanley begins part-time (10 hours weekly) as Executive Pastor

July 2004

Jay Stanley begins working 15 hours weekly as Executive Pastor

Scott Lees begins as Growing Deep Pastor.

September 2004

Launched 75 small groups with Route 1 Church-wide study.

Made sweeping schedule change; eliminated the break in the service and moved it between the services. Add Ri-Zoo to that mid-service break. Schedule begins now with 8:30 early edition; 9:45 Ri-Zoo and Common Grounds Hour and ends with 10:30 service.

October 2004

10th Midproject Update Tours of the new building led by our leadership team. Approximately 400 people toured the building despite horrendous weather.

31st Fall Festival attracts over 1700 people to our largest "come and see" event of the year.

November 2004

21st Feed the Hungry delivers over 400 meals to shutins and hungry during the Thanksgiving holiday

December 2004

5th our 6th Birthday celebrated with a party! Christmas Eve Service attended by over 850 people for Communion, Candlelight and Carols. Closed the year averaging 1,220 in worship on Sunday Mornings.

January 2005

Harris Magruder, Worship Leader resigned effective the finding of a replacement. Search for a full-time Worship Pastor began.

March 2005

26th Took over the community-wide Easter Egg hunt at Ballard Park from Tupelo City.

27th Easter Attendance 2155 (new record)!

April 2005

3rd Hired Rick Pike as the new Worship Pastor at The Orchard. Rick, his wife Dena and son Jonah join The Orchard family beginning April 24th.

24th Rick Pike's First Sunday as Worship Leader.

May 2005

29th Bishop Hope Morgan Ward preached both morning services. The first visit of a Bishop to The Orchard in its seven-year history.

July 2005

Canceled InsideOut (Family Vacation Bible School) because of construction delays.

17th: last Sunday in the Warehouse Liquidator's location.

17th: loaded 3 18-wheelers and moved what remained of The Orchard's equipment to the new location at 1379 Coley Road.

24th: first worship services held in new location and new facility. 2000 in attendance.

August 2005

31st: Held One Day Event in place of canceled Family Vacation Bible School. Maxxie Dunnam guest speaker.

September 2005

11th began 7 week small group emphasis studying Better Together 40 Days of Community by Rick Warren.

October 2005

30th Fall Festival attracts in excess of 2000. First Fall Festival in our new facility parking lot!

November 2005

20th Feed the Hungry prepares and delivers meals to over 500 in Tupelo region.

27th: Chanda Cossitt, Branching Out Minister announces that she is leaving to take a job in the private sector in Tupelo, but will continue to worship and volunteer at The Orchard.

Leadership begins receiving resumes for Branching Out Minister. Review of resumes begins January 1, 2006.

December 2005

4th: 7th Birthday Party! Followed by a Community Open House from 2-4 p.m.

19th: Announced the hiring of Margaret Buell as interim Branching Out Minister. Margaret will serve from January through May before she takes a two year appointment to Ghana, Africa as a Mission Society Missionary.

Search for permanent Branching Out Minister will continue during the interim.

24th and 25th: held identical services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (10:30 only).

Average worship attendance for the year: 1489
2005 Baptisms: 23 infant; 16 Professions of faith

January 2006

Margaret Buell begins as Interim Branching Out Minister

Began search for Permanent Branching Out Minister

February 2006

Hired Anne Palmer as part time Video Director (10 hours)

Hired Robbyn Abedi as part time Missions Director (10 hours) with position to be evaluated at end of 2006.

March 2006

23rd Leadership Team voted unanimously to hire Lynn Walker as our new Branching Out Minister. Lynn Begins Duties May 8th.

April 2006

15th Community-Wide Easter Egg Hunt at Ballard Park draws approximately 2,500 attendees

16th Easter Attendance nearly 3,000 (2,973)
New Record attendance.

23rd Lynn Walker introduced to the congregation as our new Branching Out Minister.

23rd Leadership Team hires Injoy Stewardship Services to lead capital campaign beginning in the fall.

26th Pat Ward Affirmed by Bishop and Cabinet as Campus Pastor for
The Orchard Oxford Satellite Campus.

30th Announce to The Orchard Tupelo that Pat and Sarah Ward will be moving to Oxford in the fall to lead the Oxford Campus. Standing Ovation for Pat and Sarah!

Begin search for minister to JH Students and Families immediately.

May 2006

Announced the hiring of Russ Polsgrove as the new JH Minister to Students and families. Russ and his wife Anna will move to Tupelo in July and begin their work August 6, 2006.

14th Bryan begins a 5 week sabbatical following Mother's Day service. He will not return until Father's Day, June 18th.

Leadership Team contracts with Injoy Stewardship Services to lead our Capital Campaign in fall 06.

June 2006

Pat and Sarah Ward confirmed as the new church planting couple for Oxford by the Mississippi Annual Conference.

July 2006

9-12 InsideOut/Family Vacation Bible School; 06 theme is "The Quest" Allen Newton, Pastor of the The Community Life Center in Gulf Breeze, FL is the adult speaker.

August 2006

Launched Fall Small Group Initiative with "Group is the Word" program. 60 small groups. Bill Donahue of Willow Creek Association was featured speaker at Small Group Leader Training and at the Sunday Service where we launched our fall groups

September 2006

15-16th: Held first Become Conference with 140 attendees and numerous Orchard Volunteers.

17th: Launched SPEAK Capital Campaign to run through November 12th in an effort to raise \$5 million to launch new ministry initiatives.

October 2006

29th: Fall Festival with largest attendance ever approximately 3,000 people.

November 2006

19th: Feed the Hungry served over 500 meals and delivered all leftover food to the Salvation Army for them to feed the following day.

30th: Committed 3 million dollars to SPEAK initiative that funded all new ministry objectives except for expanding youth and children's space.

December 2006

3rd: 8th Birthday Celebration!

11th Wendy Collier announced her "retirement" effective May 2007.

Christmas Eve Services held at 8:30, 10:30, and 5:00. Attendance at these three services was a combined 2,378.

Ended year averaging 1,716 in attendance, [21] infant baptisms and [22] professions of faith baptisms.

January 2007

Began search for 1 20hr/week administrative assistant; and 2 10 hr/week administrative assistants.

Began search for Minister to Children and Families to replace Joel Hawkins who moved to new responsibilities as Minister of Worship Arts and Wendy Collier who is retiring in May.