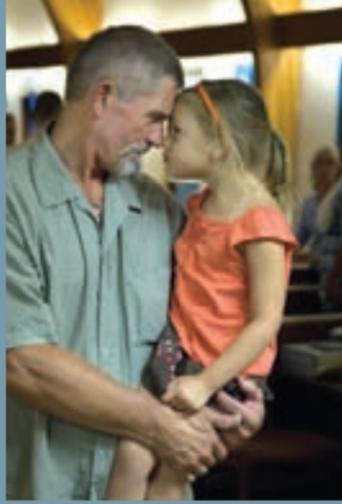


FAITHFULLY TEACHING GOD'S WORD IN SMALL TOWN AMERICA

Story by Carol Eskaros
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Pastor Wynn Royster holds granddaughter Isabella.

Yelm and Montesano, WA

Yelm & Montesano, WA

The small prairie town of Yelm, WA, belies a sleepy, peaceful appearance while an unseen battle for people's souls is waged between two worlds. On one side of the spiritual tug of war is a massive demonic "school" of enlightenment ensnaring thousands from around the world; on the other side, a small Calvary Chapel fellowship teaches the Word of God while souls are set free through faith in Jesus Christ.



Montesano is a one-light town with a population of nearly 3,100.

Pastor of both CC Yelm and CC Montesano, WA, Wynn places a folding sign outside CC Yelm's temporary meeting location. The Yelm

fellowship will move into a new facility later this year.

“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith ...”
Revelation 2:13a

In the northwestern corner of the United States, Mount Rainier rises above golden prairie fields and Nisqually River valley of Yelm, 25 miles southeast of Olympia, WA. With a name meaning “shimmering heat waves from the sun,” Yelm ironically is marked by a profound spiritual darkness. The small town is home to world-renowned New Age leader, JZ Knight, notorious for her self-proclaimed channeling of the demonic spirit, Ramtha. Dignitaries, Hollywood stars, Wall Street moguls, and thousands of common folk from all over the world have come to Ramtha’s School of Enlightenment (RSE), founded by Knight in 1987. An estimated 3,000 RSE attendees live within 50 miles of the school—that’s in a town of only 4,500.

In the tiny community, JZ Knight’s influence reaches from the local schools—to which she makes generous contributions and is welcomed to freely teach the children about Ramtha’s teachings, including one’s own godhood—to the local chamber of commerce. Many of her students are also teachers in Yelm’s public school system.

Despite its dark spiritual landscape, Yelm is not without a strong witness for Christ. Since 1994, Calvary Chapel Yelm, under the leadership of Pastor Wynn Royster, has been reaching out amidst the darkness.

As an elder for eight years at Calvary Chapel Olympia under Pastor Chuck Lind, Wynn taught the Bible when Chuck was out of town. At that time, families who lived near Yelm were driving nearly 25 miles to fellowship at CC Olympia.



Believers fellowship outside CC Montesano. The old theater is undergoing renovation.

Soon, “I was essentially kicked out of the nest,” recalled Wynn. Chuck encouraged Wynn to teach a Bible study in Yelm. In 1994, the outreach fellowship started meeting in the community building of a gated community. In January 1995, the study became an official Calvary Chapel.

In a few years, the study in Yelm went from that location to the local middle school where, ironically, the fellowship occasionally held services at the same time as JZ Knight’s New Age seminars.

“She was in the common area of the school with a few thousand people,” recalled Wynn, “and we were in the Home Economics Room with a dozen or so folks.” Expressing confidence in God’s power over any other, Wynn quoted his life verse, Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD of hosts.” Despite the fellowship’s small numbers, God continued to work.



Dave Marshall teaches Sunday school.

In 2000, Calvary Yelm moved from the middle school to a local Baptist church. “Finding a place to hold services was not easy,” said Wynn. “The original town burned down, so there are not a lot of buildings to find. One day when I walked

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Pastor Wynn Royster



Believers gather for coffee, treats, and fellowship at CC Montesano’s recently purchased church—a 1926-era theater.

“God has always provided faithfully, and the people have given sacrificially.”

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up to the Baptist church, I just felt from the Lord that this would be where we would finally meet.”

Because the Baptist church holds services on Wednesdays and Sundays, CC Yelm meets on Tuesday and Saturday evenings.

“That schedule has been difficult,” explained Wynn. “It has affected how many people come out to church because most folks still expect to have church on Sundays.” Nearly 60 adults regularly attend CC Yelm.

Despite these challenges, God has richly blessed CC Yelm. “The fellowship has never wanted financially. God has always provided faithfully, and the people have given sacrificially,” said Wynn. As a result, CC Yelm purchased five acres of land and



Right, Wynn shares with Alyssa Rofler, left, and Sharon O'Connor.



Ron McCullab, left, leads Anna McCullab, Madie, and Hannah Sipes in a game at CC Yelm's midweek meeting.

“People are starving for the Word of God and are excited to be receiving it.”

Pastor Wynn Royster



Alani, the center of attention, smiles at her father, Gary Rebamonte, left.



Lori Davila ministers to the youth.



Wynn teaches from God's Word at CC Yelm.

is building its own facility, which is scheduled for completion in early 2007. The new facility will seat more than 200 and will enable CC Yelm to meet on Thursday evenings and on Sunday mornings.

Wynn's wife, Teresa, added, “Having our own space will make it possible for us to do more things and spend more time together as a fellowship.” Speaking of the ministry in Yelm, Teresa added, “There have been many obstacles, but God has been so faithful. I have been able to see many people here grow deeply in their walks with the Lord.”

One such person is Dave Steinberg, whose small family has attended CC Yelm for four years. “Because Yelm is a small church, we

really learn how to minister to others. In a large church, it is easy for some folks to just come and go, but in a church like ours, you need to step out to serve in a variety of areas,” said Dave.

Dave's wife, Marialyce, manages the church's financial books. “At first, I considered myself totally inadequate to take on this task,” she said. “But God has reminded me that He will not call us to do anything for which He has not prepared us.”

Dave and Marialyce glorified God for provision and growth. “It's like the loaves and the fishes. We bring our little bit, and God multiplies,” Dave said. “The church has not grown fast, and Wynn hasn't resorted to gimmicks to help it grow. He keeps us

in the Word, and the Holy Spirit takes care of the rest.”

While planting CC Yelm seemed a series of uphill battles, planting a fellowship in the town of Montesano—one hour west of Yelm—has been a completely different experience, Wynn recounted.

Six years ago, Wynn felt God leading him to teach somewhere in addition to Yelm. He soon began a Bible study in the home of a woman who had moved from the Yelm area to Montesano. The study grew and moved to the upper floor of a local building, adjacent to an abandoned theater.

“I kept bugging the owners about selling us the theater. I kept after them until God

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against ... spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12



Dee Dee and Scott Sipes, left, share a laugh with Sharon and Preston Miltier.



CC Yelm's new facilities will seat nearly 200, enabling believers to meet more often.

opened the door and we bought the building for a great price in February 2003,” Wynn said. The theater, which was built in 1926, is currently undergoing a remodeling project and seats about 250 people.

Started three years ago, the Calvary fellowship in Montesano meets on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings with nearly 100 adults.

Wynn described the Montesano fellowship as “pure oxygen.” He contrasted Yelm and Montesano’s spiritual climate: “You feel it right when you get into Montesano. Yelm is dark in many ways. Some even call it one of the [spiritually] hardest places south of Seattle, but Montesano is much more open. People are starving for the Word of God and are excited to be receiving it.”

God has brought many to the Montesano fellowship through local broadcasts of the Calvary Satellite Network (CSN) Radio. “I first heard the verse-by-verse style of Bible study on CSN Radio, and I just had to have more of that teaching,” said Scott Devlin.

Scott and his wife, Trina, have attended the Montesano fellowship for five years. “So many churches ... are either entertainment driven or overly traditional,” Scott said. “We love Wynn’s commitment to just following Scripture. It has given me such a firm foundation in my walk with the Lord.

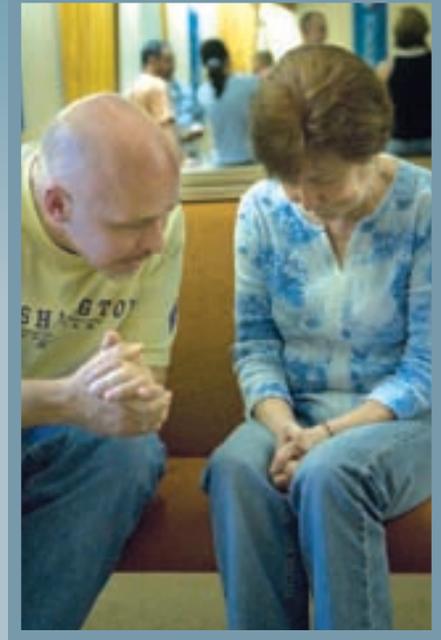
He doesn’t add any extra. He just teaches the Word of God. That’s all we need.”

Nathan Hester and his wife, Annie, also first heard of the Calvary fellowship in Montesano on CSN. At one time, Nathan served as pastor of a denominational church but left when he felt the denomination began promoting lifestyles contrary to Scripture. “In the church I came from, a pastor was really just a hireling. It was a career, not a calling,” Nathan said. “Wynn is so different; with him we get straight teaching. He keeps us well grounded and encourages us to utilize our gifts.”

According to Nathan, who now serves as an elder in Montesano, Pastor Wynn is the right man for the job in this difficult Northwest region. “Wynn doesn’t pull any punches. He does not skirt the tough stuff in the Scriptures. He teaches us to apply God’s Word to our lives. It has helped us so much.”

Throughout the history of struggles in Yelm and consistent growth and open doors in Montesano, there is no question that God is working within these fellowships and through Wynn. His wife, Teresa, noted that Psalm 27 captures the essence of their ministry in many ways.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD



Kevin O’Hara prays with Erna Powers.

is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalm 27:1, 13–14

With the new facility in Yelm, believers look forward to new opportunities to fellowship and reach out to the community so in need of a Savior. 🙏

Calvary Chapel Yelm

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Yelm is located just south of Seattle, WA.