

LOCAL CHURCH OFFERS HOPE AT VIRGINIA TECH

CC Roanoke

Story by Christmas McGaughey
Photos by Tom Price

I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

Psalm 9:1



The congregation at CC Roanoke helped build out a former grocery store.

On a bright April morning, teenagers clasped hands or raised them in praise. At the Sunday worship service of Calvary Chapel Roanoke, VA, there was little difference between the worship of the 13- and 30-year-olds.

“Ever since I served at CC Fingerlakes, NY, I thought it was healthy for the teens to be in the body and part of what’s going on in the main worship service,” said Pastor Brian Phillips of CC Roanoke. “I believe the teenagers are young adults. In the

Bible, there aren’t any ‘teenagers,’ just children and young adults. I’ve always treated them that way—given them that respect and expectation—and they respond to that.” He added that every CC church has the freedom to include youth as they see fit. “They also have a night where they can fellowship together on Thursdays.”

Young Examples

He believes the teens at CC Roanoke have responded well to being included in the

main service, and they have also blessed older members of the fellowship. “When people see 30 teenagers worshipping the Lord with all their might, it stirs them. They respond to that,” he added. “Some people think it’s hard to relate to teens, but here they are just part of the fellowship.”

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

Brian and his wife Leah have five children—three of whom are teenagers—all of whom actively serve at the church.

They and other teens minister through music—especially in helping lead children’s worship, where it’s beneficial to have a lot of energy to sing with hand motions and an upbeat manner.

Kelsey Rooney, 15, is a believer and helps with children’s worship: “I enjoy it, and it teaches me patience.” She added that she likes participating in the adult service and having youth Bible study on Thursday night. “We are going through Genesis, and it’s encouraging to see that people in the



Teenagers enjoy a time of praise after the Bible teaching in the sanctuary.

Bible are like people today. We struggle with a lot of the same things.”

Rachel Phillips, 16, one of the pastor’s daughters, said, “Coming to youth group every week is encouraging because we’re all believers and ... we encourage and pray for one another.” Being in the adult service on Sunday doesn’t detract from the teens’ closeness as a group. She added, “We all hang out together.”

Freedom to Serve

The pastor said he doesn’t pressure people to serve, whether they are teens or adults. He believes in feeding people God’s Word and letting the Holy Spirit call each person to the ministry He has for them in His time. “We don’t have to coerce people to serve,” Brian said. “We feed people, God works in their hearts, and then God works through them.”

He added, “God has raised up godly men who love Jesus and serve in this church. When [the Virginia Tech tragedy] happened, every elder took off work without anyone asking. They just



Young men lift their hands in praise to the Lord during worship. Young adults stay in the sanctuary for the Sunday service and have their own service on Thursday night.



An opportunity is given to respond to God’s Word during the final song of worship.

came to do what needed to be done.” He said there was no formal program to minister to Virginia Tech students; believers went as they felt prompted by the Lord. He sent email updates weekly to inform the church of how the Lord was working on campus.

Other believers testified of freedom to serve as God leads. “When we [started coming], we were ready to work. But they encouraged us to just plug in and be filled and wait for God’s timing. So we did, and in a few months, the Lord directed us to minister through hospitality,” said Leigh Anne Droubay. “I have been learning that the Bible speaks of hospitality as a [spiritual] gift. I always thought a gift would require effort, but this is so easy.”

A Tough Beginning

Pastor Brian came from a rocky childhood to the place of spiritual fruitfulness he is in now; in a sense, so did the church.

“When I came here 5½ years ago, the church had a lot of problems,” he recalled. Anti-biblical practices and teaching had crept in. “It was a Calvary in name only.”

He assumed that bringing everything back to the Bible would only take a month or two; it took nearly eight months. “God was teaching me patience. He had to basically dissolve this fellowship and start over. All of the elders resigned,” he said. During those months, all church activity was suspended except for Bible study and prayer groups for men and women. He knew they needed to be grounded in the Word of God.

“At the lowest point, we shrunk down to 12 people on a Sunday morning. It’s a painful thing, very ugly and bitter—a lot of hardship,” he said. “After about eight months, God started building His church, bringing new folks in. It takes time for the church to grow and mature—years feeding on the Word of God.”

He has shared with other pastors about how hard it is to see people leave the fellowship, some walking away from God completely. “If you love people, then you are going to



Amanda Moses, left, and Anna Phillips lead the worship time for the children’s ministry.



Jill Osborn, left, gets a welcoming hug from Tulima Joseph as she arrives at church.

hurt—it’s very real,” he said. “In ministry, there is pain. But Jesus understands that. He was ‘despised and rejected’ by all men—none of us is going to experience that extreme—but there are ups and downs in ministry.” Even through the worst, there was a faithful remnant of believers seeking the Lord. “I saw consistent, willing prayer, and I knew God was going to work even as we were shrinking.”

Vision to Persevere

Brian recounted that the Lord had prepared him in advance for the rough start. “Even before I came here, God gave me a vision for what He wanted to do,” he said, citing a passage in Isaiah.

“Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert ... to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise.”

Isaiah 43:18-21

“God said for me to be patient,” Brian remembered. “They were going to praise Him. He would pour water on the thirsty.” After a while, the church grew to 40, then 80. They moved to different locations as more were added to the fellowship. “I felt that God was saying if I would pray and feed them the Word, this would become a healthy fellowship. That’s what we’ve seen God do.”

He added, “You just keep trusting the Lord, feeding and loving God’s people. They will grow in their relationship with the Lord and become what He has designed them to be.” After nearly six years, the fruit is obvious: there is a friendly atmosphere in the church; children and adults are worshiping the Lord with fervor; many volunteer to serve on a regular basis.

Members of the fellowship recently worked together to refurbish an old grocery store into their main sanctuary building, complete with classrooms and tile flooring. To reach the teens and families around them, CC Roanoke does several outreaches—including baseball camps and picnics at the community park near the church. 🍌

“I will bless you ... and you shall be a blessing.” Genesis 12:2b

CC Roanoke
www.calvarychapelroanoke.org
 540-774-8400



Left to right, Pastor Brian Phillips, his wife Leah, Sam Dean, and Derek Blaakman discuss God’s Word.



Greg Rooney, left, and Greg Van Scott pray with Uche Elechi.



Rachel Osborn, right, a children’s ministry teacher, encourages the children to sing during their own time of worship before class.

**“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
 You have perfected praise.”**

Matthew 21:16b