

DIVINELY DIRECTED

New Life Fellowship Celebrates 20 Years

by Samantha Snively

Twenty-five years ago, Newton Hoilette, then vice president for Student Services, noticed that a percentage of students weren't attending church. He initiated an assessment that spanned three years, speaking with students across campus, key campus personnel, and PMC church staff. The assessment determined that "the worship options on campus were not meeting the diverse spiritual needs for a vast number of students." The students had expressed their desires to the Black Faculty Fellowship for more student participation in the church service, as well as a freedom of spiritual expression.

To that end, the "Black Worship Committee" was formed in 1990 to create an ethnically inclusive worship service whose target audience was the African-American population on campus. The committee included the founding members of what became New Life Fellowship: Walter Douglas, Norman Miles and James North, Seminary faculty; Chaplain David Rand of Campus Ministries; Hoilette, and Doug Kilcher, director of field education in the Seminary. Later that year, James North was elected to



serve as the senior pastor of New Life, and Kenneth Mulzac, then a doctoral student in the Seminary, served as the pulpit pastor, with David Rand as the faculty sponsor.

New Life Fellowship held its first service on Oct. 5, 1991, with more than 200 attendees

in the Seminary Chapel. Over the past 20 years, they have doubled their membership. New Life regularly hosts more than 400 worshippers each Sabbath, and they no longer all fit in the Seminary Chapel.

To celebrate 20 years of ministry and



blessings, New Life Fellowship held an anniversary celebration on Oct. 7 and 8, 2011. Past leaders, attendees, musicians and leaders flew in from across the country to celebrate, reunite and worship with friends. 770 attendees packed into the Howard



Performing Arts Center for the Silent Praise reunion concert on Friday night, and “more and more people kept coming. We had about 820 people attending on Sabbath, on a Fall Break weekend, which was amazing,” says Louise Albert, one of the coordinators of the weekend. On Saturday, Patrick Graham, senior pastor of the Sharon SDA Church in Baltimore, Md., and an alumnus of Andrews University, gave the sermon during the Divine Service. Saturday afternoon featured a “Conversation with the Founders,” including James North, Newton Hoilette and David Rand, as well as current leaders R. Clifford Jones, associate dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and Timothy Nixon, campus chaplain for inreach.

The weekend closed with a Deliverance Mass Choir (DMC) reunion concert. DMC began in 1994 under the direction of Carlton Byrd, with the intent of “bringing hope, peace, and joy to those who experience their ministry.” The 120-voice choir is currently under the direction of Adrian and Leilani Langdon. For the reunion concert, past choir members were invited to join in. At the end of the concert, Langdon made a spontaneous

appeal to anyone who wanted to give their lives to Jesus, and nearly 20 students came to the front.

As the weekend ended, participants began to ask, “Is this going to become an annual thing? Because that was a powerful weekend.” Many attendees expressed the blessings they received from seeing how the Lord had led over the past two decades. “Our goal was to pause and say thank you,” said Louise Albert. “God has been with us for 20 years, and it would have been ungrateful if we didn’t pause and look back at what He has done.”

New Life Fellowship continues to be a venue for students to get involved in a meaningful worship experience. Spiritual leaders such as Dilys Brooks, associate campus chaplain at Loma Linda; Adrian Townsend, and David Franklin all got their start in New Life. Current students still organize, plan and participate in the church service, whether in music or preaching; even the reunion was largely student-planned.

Because of the huge positive response to the first reunion, plans are underway for a 25th anniversary celebration.

Opposite: Silent Praise performed a reunion concert on Friday evening in the Howard Performing Arts Center. **Above:** Patrick Graham, senior pastor of the Sharon Adventist Church in Baltimore, Md., preached for the divine service. **Below:** The house was packed for the Deliverance Mass Choir reunion concert on Saturday evening.



REFLECTIONS ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP

by *Newton W. Hoilette*

I was satisfied, gratified and elated to see New Life “last” for so long, woven into the fabric of Andrews University, accomplishing that for which it was designed. This is what I envisioned in 1990, to which I dedicated myself for one year, formulating and ‘staking’ it into the University structure administratively, academically and spiritually in ways that would best guarantee longevity. We launched the service in October 1991, meeting every other week as a test to see whether it had the potential and will to sustain itself for the long haul.

New Life was designed to facilitate the existent need for worship in a particular manner for a significant sector of our student body, so that they would maintain, develop and experience a sustained relationship with Christ. For some students, it would lead them to find Christ for the first time. This value is essential to Christian education, and as vice president for Student Services back then I was committed to taking that seriously.

The reality was, and still is, that various people groups in God’s creation just worship differently! In the minority community there is a way the Spoken Word is shared, a way the song is sung, and a way values are shared, that evokes the language of tears which speaks to the heartfelt need of the soul. On the anniversary weekend I experienced that consistency in the vibrant worship atmosphere still present at New Life after 20 years!

I wanted that type of worship to endure in this Church Fellowship so that students wouldn’t have an excuse for not going to church on Sabbaths; so that parents then and parents of the future would always have the confidence that their children had a place to enjoy as well as to participate in worship while experiencing spiritual ownership.

It was also very critical for me to provide students with the opportunity to sing in a large church choir, expressing their style of personal praise. Toward that end, I asked Carlton Byrd to transfer his Pastoral Formation assignment into New Life as an associate. Thus, Deliverance Mass Choir (DMC) came into being in 1994. One of the greatest moments for me at the anniversary celebration was to see Deliverance still going strong, and to see young people giving their lives to Christ at the Saturday night concert. I said to myself, “Yes, this is what it is all about!” I was absolutely moved! I looked around and saw people in my row crying together with others on stage standing alongside University Chaplain Timothy Nixon, whom I had left in charge back in 2003.

Another blessing was to see past workers of New Life—assistant pastors, choir directors, foundation student worshippers, musicians, ushers and current students—come



Newton Hoilette took part in a panel discussion on Saturday afternoon, Oct. 8, with some of the original founders of New Life Fellowship. Pictured, **L–R:** Clifford Jones, David Rand, Newton Hoilette, James North and Timothy Nixon

by to say thank-you. Some of them testified how God has transformed their lives. I felt very privileged and fortunate that God had placed me at Andrews University at such a time.

As I sat through the weekend, I reminisced with deep appreciation of the late Ken Mulzac, the first pastor, who made biblical theology come alive as he preached during those early years, and Don Edwards, the second pastor, whose preaching made Bible stories come alive for practical living. These men were uniquely suited for their time in setting the spiritual foundations of New Life, upon which Clifford Jones and Timothy Nixon have earnestly built.

As I sat in the Divine Service in the packed-to-capacity Howard Performing Arts Center, it was an awesome feeling to receive appreciative accolades. More so, I praised the Lord for Patrick Graham, a past assistant, as he preached Christ to us on this celebratory occasion. He represents the success story of what New Life has accomplished in providing a platform for many seminarians to achieve experience in service for the Lord.

The evidence is clear, and I am assured that New Life is a place where people give their lives to Christ! New Life is where young ministerial aspirants have opportunities to practice ministry. New Life is where worship through the Word, prayer and praise takes place. New Life is where fellowship is developed as per Acts 2:42–47. New Life is where “amazing” happens. New Life was created for this purpose. As pioneer and founder along with David Rand, Walter Douglas, Norman Miles, James North and the late Doug Kilcher, who all assisted me through thick and thin, I say unequivocally, the creation of New Life was divinely directed! ■