

The Future of Northside Lutheran Ministries:
Bringing the Changeless Gospel
To a Changing Neighborhood

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“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever¹.” It is such a comfort to know that God and his gospel promises will never change. Yet as God’s people go into all nations to preach the good news, they will find themselves in an ever changing world. The inner-city of Milwaukee is no different. The dynamics of the neighborhoods are always changing. People are always coming and going. That is what is happening to the neighborhood in which Northside Lutheran Ministries has established itself. Certainly this is no surprise that people are always moving in and out of the area. This has been the case ever since Northside was established on the corner of 26th and North Avenue. But now the trend is occurring that higher income families are moving in and lower income families are moving out. Northside was specifically founded to serve low income families with the gospel of Jesus. Pastor Bill Kirchner of Northside Lutheran Ministries speaks about the future of Northside and bringing the changeless gospel to a changing neighborhood.

On January 1, 1998 Pastor Bill Kirchner became the pastor of Northside. For almost nine years God has blessed his outreach efforts to the poor. He has built relationships not only on a physical level, but more importantly on a spiritual level as the lost come to know how they have been saved through Jesus. Pastor Bill says Northside exists for that reason – “to share the message of hope in Jesus Christ in the central city of Milwaukee.”

Pastor Bill has noticed new changes that have taken place within the community for the past nine years. Many “Habitat for Humanity” homes have been built. Pastor Bill has noticed that every year around twenty to thirty homes have been going up and are coming closer and closer to the ministries location at 26th and North Avenue. It is common to see a boarded up house with broken windows next to a brand new house. For an example, please look at picture

¹ Hebrews 13:8

number one on the picture pages. About 4 blocks south and 4 blocks east of Northside, a new subdivision called "City Homes" was built (see picture number two). As of 2004, City Homes had about 80 homes with an assessed value of \$110,000-\$126,000.²

New businesses and community centers are also being built. City developers plan to build a ten million dollar neighborhood shopping center one block south of Northside according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.³ The Todd Wehr Metcalfe Community Center, located on 33rd and North Avenue, opened in 2000 (see picture numbers 3 and 4). The most recent project is "Columbia Square" -- a \$3.8 million three-story building developed on vacant property that includes 22 apartments on the upper levels and street-level office and retail space. "Columbia Square" is across the street from the community center and is set to open in April.

About these recent developments, Pastor Bill says, "The physical appearance of the neighborhood is changing. So also the economics are changing in lots of ways." As the neighborhood improves the cost of living is going up. This has lead Pastor Bill to say, "How long can people who live in poverty continue to stay here and survive is going to be a big question. . . People are finding that they need to look for new places because the homes that they live in are being condemned or torn down. In other places the landlords have tried to fix them up a little bit which also brings up the rent quite a bit." Pastor Bill tells a story about a Northside client whose monthly rent went up over \$300!

Have these neighborhood changes had an effect upon attendance of worship services and devotions? Has attendance gone down? Actually, the attendance is going up. Thanks to the

² Wells, Kelly. "Subdivision Inspires Changes In Area" The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. (February 14, 2004.) Available from: <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=207102>; Internet Accessed December 9, 2006

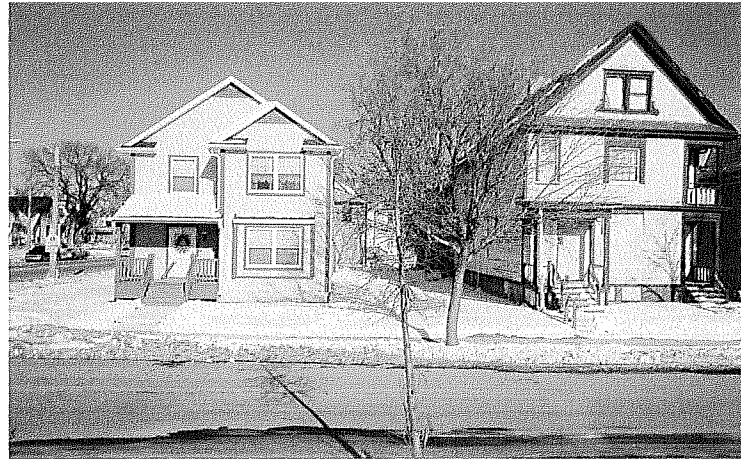
³ Dakin, Tom. "Developers plan \$10 million retail center in the central city" The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. (September 26, 2006.) Available from: <http://www.knowledgeplex.org/news/200730.html?el=1>; Internet Accessed December 9, 2006.

Holy Spirit, the members of Northside continue to attend devotions and worship services even if they live a considerable distance away. Low income families in the area continue to make use of the ministry's facilities.

As the neighborhood changes and the cost of living keeps on rising, is there anything that Northside may have to keep in mind as they continue to share the gospel with the community? Since the mission of this ministry is to share the gospel with the underprivileged, Pastor Bill says that a new extension office may be needed in the future. "As the dynamics of the neighborhood change, we are going to have to feel our way through that."

The number one need of this community and all communities is the message of salvation in Christ Jesus. As Northside provides the gospel needs, people can also receive much needed clothing and food. God has blessed this ministry where it is. There is no reason to move out. As outreach to the less fortunate continues in a changing neighborhood, will Northside have to build an extension office or even change places? That may be a question that is considered down the road. As of now, God is blessing the efforts of Northside in bringing the unchanging gospel to a changing neighborhood.

Picture #1



The picture above shows a new house next to condemned and boarded up house. This helps to demonstrate how the neighborhood is growing. These houses are located about 2 blocks south of Northside.

Picture #2



Picture #2 shows a couple of the beautiful homes in the City Homes subdivision.

Picture #3



The picture above is the building of the Todd Wehr Metcalfe Community Center. It is located 7 blocks north of Northside. This is just one of the brand new buildings that has been newly constructed.

Picture #4



Picture #4 is a picture of a condemned building – found directly across the street from the newly constructed Todd Wehr Metcalfe Community Center. Sights like these are becoming harder to find as the neighborhood rebuilds.

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