

Friday, August 24, 2007

Church ready to build on faith

By TIMES-REPUBLICAN



T-R PHOTO BY RYAN BRINKS

A seven-acre plot next to the service station on the corner of Iowa and 18th avenues will be the future home of a new Liberty Baptist Church building, but the timing and funding — like that of the land purchase — will be dependent on God's provision.

The small but growing Liberty Baptist Church congregation that now has a new seven-acre future building site started with nothing but a strong vision and strong convictions.

There was no money, no church members outside Pastor Randy Mason and his family and no permanent facility to meet at. But Mason had a vision of reaching out to everyone in Central Iowa, and he thought it meant reaching out to Hispanics.

“The ministry began out of a total leap of faith. That’s how it began and how it has been proceeding ever since,” he said.

The pilot who picked up Spanish on trips to Central America saw a ministry focused on but not exclusive to area Hispanics grow into a new church in January of 2005.

“But after 2.5 years, where it was growing was in the non-Hispanic population,” Mason said. “I didn’t know where it would go other than reaching out to people. ... There are a lot of well-

By the time negotiations with the owner of a chunk of land near the intersection of Iowa and 18th avenues reached a six-figure asking price, the members had saved up \$12,000.

Having knelt on that ground and prayed for God to give them the resources, and having committed to never borrow a dime, never pay interest on a loan or be plunged into debt, Mason said the journey “seemed so far from human possibility, but that God could do it.”

Then both he and the voting majority of his congregation suddenly wiped out their bank account on behalf of a building-less pastor in Nicaragua.

“God impressed on my heart the principle of sowing and reaping, that you can’t outgive God and that you should give before you receive,” he said.

One of five pastors fresh out of seminary in Central America was just waiting for a building to serve in, a \$12,000 building.

“I knew it would be a huge challenge to tell our church to wipe out our bank account — when we have no building ourselves — and give it to [them],” Mason said.

But they voted in favor and sent a check in September, 2006. And the \$12,000 that had taken them 70 weeks to raise returned in seven. Between then and April of this year, the total rose to \$80,000 and leadership came to formal terms with the landowner: a total of \$102,430. Then within three weeks of the Aug. 14 closing deadline, they were short \$18,000, and three days to it \$11,000.

Then Mason met with a guy who said he was so impressed with the way the church stepped forward to help Nicaragua that he left a \$12,000 check on the table, the pastor said.

“We hope the way our church was founded teaches people that God really does honor His word,” Mason said. “My message to people is that God is real and He wants to have a relationship with each one of us — a relationship that’s rich, fulfilling and personal. And he honors those who walk by faith. Put God first and make Him your No. 1 priority and God will bless your lives beyond measure.”

Now Liberty Baptist just needs half a million dollars for a building.

“I have no idea [how it will happen], but if He doesn’t do it, it won’t happen,” he said. “God has a way of taking pennies and turning them into thousands of dollars.”

The congregation, which now involves approximately 120 community members, has no timeline for building on their new seven-acre plot, roughly a football field wide and several deep, but it is enough space for ballfields or other dreams.