

BELIEFS Values

Leap of faith leads to Church on the Go

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Nearly 200 individuals filled the gymnasium of Southfield's Birney Middle School on Jan. 7 for the grand opening of Church on the Go.

"It was incredible," said Pastor Mark Yurich, who welcomed family, friends and a host of new faces to join the six month old congregation. "We're off and running."

Pioneering a church was not something Yurich and his wife, Jill, originally set out to do. For the last 13 years, the couple had committed themselves to building children's and youth ministry programs in Oakland County.

But last January, Yurich began to sense a new calling after spending a week of praying, fasting and seeking God.

"The Lord talked to me through Mark," recalled Yurich, referring to Bible verse Mark 16:15. "Jesus told his disciples to go and tell the Good News to all people."

For Yurich, the verse became the spark that put him and Jill "on the go for Christ." And Jill was very receptive to leaving her comfort zone at an established church and taking a leap of faith

to journey out on their own. "We feel we're on an expressway for God and others will merge with us along the way," said the mother of two.

The Yurichs founded Church on the Go with four other individuals last June in their Oak Park home. And through word of mouth, the fledgling congregation quickly grew to 25 active members who today comprise the group's core.

"Our mission is reaching adults, teenagers and children with the love of God and the Good News of Christ," said Yurich.

The non-denominational, family-oriented church has a charismatic flair and places a strong emphasis on teaching the Word of God. For children and youth, the Gospel is brought to life through costumes, drama and puppetry in a "Sesame Street" approach.

Though the church is in its early growing stages, Yurich seems less concerned with membership numbers.

"Numbers mean nothing unless you're doing something for God," said Yurich. "The key to growth is to put something in the people's hands to do. It gives people ownership of the church. My job is to



WILLIAM HANSEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Energized by God: Singing praises at a Sunday service are Pastor Mark Yurich (left), Jill Yurich and Beckie Goodmoot.

delegate responsibilities and let the people run with the gifts God's given them."

Jill, who likes to cook for hundreds at a time, plans to distribute lunches to the hungry on street corners.

"I've got a gift of hospitality and I'd like to use this gift for other people," said Jill, who oper-

ated a licensed day care center in her home for 15 years before committing to Church on the Go.

"We're putting wheels on the Gospel and doing what the Bible says to do. People want to get out on the streets and do what Jesus did."

Before entering full-time ministry in 1988, Yurich spent 13 years

in the military, serving as a drill sergeant and an army recruiter. Since founding Church on the Go, he has returned to the secular job market on a part-time basis and is employed by Mr. Sponge Waterproofing. Jill is now a nanny.

The Yurichs, who are both Royal Oak natives, enjoy boating and camping with their grown children, Lisa and Joshua. Eventually, they hope to leave their part-time jobs to focus all their efforts on Church on the Go.

Dean and Shelley Teaster have known Yurich for six years and have witnessed the spiritual effects of his ministry.

"Mark has a knack for reaching people in such a way that they understand what God is all about. He's right there on everybody's level," said Shelley Teaster, a computer operator. "We wanted the opportunity to be part of a new creation of the church. The whole concept of what they're doing is what drew us in."

Last October, the Teasters began opening their Beverly Hills home to Church on the Go for weekly worship services.

"In our home, we could only hold 25-30 people," said Teaster. "With the building, we're able to reach more people, which is our goal."

Teaster currently serves the church wherever she's needed. Her husband, who owns Mr. Sponge Waterproofing in Troy, serves on the church board and as an usher.

For the last 10 years, John and Becky Goodmoot of Troy have watched Yurich refocus his ministry from children to adults.

"When Mark began sharing his vision, my husband and I knew we were meant to be a part of it. So we hitched our wagon from the very beginning and joined in pioneering the church," said Becky Goodmoot, an office manager for Wayne State University.

"At Church on the Go, I have the opportunity to serve however God wants to use me. There are so many opportunities, so many places available for people to serve. It is so much fun to be doing things for God."

Goodmoot serves as greater captain and as a member of the praise and worship team. She also helped design the church's welcome packets and the 5,000 grand opening flyers that were distributed throughout the city of Southfield in December.

"It's incredibly exciting to be able to share this with other people," said Goodmoot. "I hope that we never allow people to be lost in the crowd. This is a church where we want people to reach their full potential."

Yurich's 13 years in the U.S. Army taught him character, integrity, organization and to lead by example — gifts he easily brings to his ministry. And as he builds his church with mature Christians and the unchurched alike, Yurich continues to stress his "KISS theory" — "Keep it simple, saints."

Church on the Go holds Sunday morning worship services at 10 a.m. at Birney Middle School, on the northeast corner of I-696 and Evergreen in Southfield. For more information, call Pastor Mark Yurich at (313) 414-3299.

COMMUNITY MESSENGER

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ARMENIAN WORLD LEADER
His Holiness Karekin I, consecrated last April as Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of All Armenians, will visit Southfield as the fifth stop among seven cities in his Eastern Diocese itinerary. The Armenian Apostolic Ortho-

dox Church's new world leader will visit Oakland County on a five-week tour to the United States and Canada with a visit Friday-Saturday, Jan. 19-20, to St. John's Armenian Church and Cultural Center in Southfield.

The theme of Karekin's trip is, "A New Era — Church, Youth, Community," and he will emphasize interaction with the church's youth.

St. John's is the largest parish in the United States with 15,000 members.

Karekin's local itinerary begins with a brief reception Friday at a private hangar at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport.

There will be a service at 6 p.m. at St. John's, to which leaders of many religions from all over metropolitan Detroit have been invited, plus political and other dignitaries.

At 7:30 p.m., there will be a banquet at the cultural center, then the next day's events begin with a Mass at 10 a.m. His Holiness will address Armenian children of metro Detroit at noon and at 6 p.m. Saturday deliver a special message to young Armenian adults.

The Supreme Patriarch, also

called the Catholicos, is seated at Echmiadzin, near Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Karekin was consecrated April 4, succeeding deceased Catholicos Vasken I, who died in August 1994 after leading the church for nearly 40 years.

There are close to 1 million Armenians in the U.S. and Canada. Of them, 30,000 are Armenian Church members who live in Michigan.

The Armenian Church is an independent Christian church. It is not part of Eastern Orthodox

churches or Eastern Rite Catholic churches, though it shares many of the same beliefs.

UNIVERSITY OF LIFE
First United Methodist Church, 1589 W. Maple, Birmingham, is offering six new University of Life classes for adults, 7:30-9 p.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 23, 30 and Feb. 6. Classes include an overview of China: Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong; Personal Investing; Cooking Tips From Experts; For Better or For Worse, and Adult and Infant CPR.

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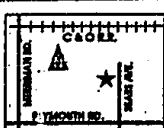
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