



West Woods Bible Chapel

Hamden, Connecticut

West Woods Bible Chapel (WWBC) began in 1939. A family that had migrated from western Canada settled in the New Haven area of southern Connecticut and subsequently started a fellowship for believers. Initially, the believers met in the storefront of a commercial complex. The ministry was initially known as Christian Believers Assembly of Hamden, with George MacWilliam, Doug MacWilliam and George Thomson signing the original articles of incorporation. Subsequently the meeting relocated to a small church building on Newhall Street in a border community between the city of New Haven and the town of Hamden.

As the ministry continued to grow, adequate facilities to accommodate the expanding ministry presented a challenge. The saints prayed and waited on the Lord, and He opened the door for relocation. In 1961, a single-family residence on a nice piece of land on Hillfield Road in Hamden was purchased. The property was subdivided and the house sold. With funds from the sale of the house and a loan from Stewards Foundation, the current church building was designed and built. This new facility provided accommodations for approximately 200. While the building was under construction, the church met in the Hamden volunteer fire department building on Shepard Avenue. In November 1963, the ministry of West Woods Bible Chapel officially occupied the new building. The ministry of West Woods has been varied with great emphasis placed on worship, sound biblical teaching, prayer, fellowship groups, service and a strong missionary focus.

In the ensuing decade the ministry realized significant growth, spiritually and numerically. The need to expand the ministry in order to serve and minister to communities

beyond our immediate borders became apparent. The establishment of new churches was encouraged through home Bible studies.



As the saints prayed and looked to the Scriptures, the Lord established testimonies in some of these communities. This pattern continues today, and we are very grateful to the Lord for giving that vision and enablement to the saints who preceded us. The other aspect of this expansion saw the founding of a School K-12 to provide a Christ centered education experience for those families desiring it.

“The Stewards Foundation connection proved to be a God-send”

West Woods Christian Academy (WWCA) was started in 1975 with 17 students. The Academy grew steadily to the point of outgrowing the church facility. In 1997, the Lord provided an additional facility to support the expanding ministry of WWCA (up to nearly 150 students). This additional 32,000 square foot two story building, also located in Hamden, provided the perfect place for WWCA (known as 2105 State Street). With God’s provision both proper-

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I CORINTHIANS 4:2, “IT IS REQUIRED

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ties have been debt free for many years.

WWCA continued to thrive until the early 2010's when student enrollment began to drastically decline. The School Board continued make yearly adjustments to tuition levels to cover the operating costs. But by 2018, the WWCA School Board in conjunction with the WWBC Elders had to make the tough decision to sunset the school ministry after 43 years of operation and nearly 400 graduates.

The problem then became a unique one. What do you do with a building that has operating expenses with no viable revenue? Enter Stewards Foundation and Believer's Stewardship Services (BSS). With just one phone call the ball was rolling so to speak. The Stewards Foundation connection proved to be a God-send. Doug Rice (from Dallas) fast-tracked a loan which we received in late July 2018. Rob Sullivan (NYC) and Nathan Griffiths (Canada), and George Duncan (PA) from Believers Stewardship Services (BSS) came and helped guide us in so many decisions, especially in the selection of a local real estate agent that they recommended. Everything was done prayerfully and professionally.

Selling a commercial property did not prove to be an easy process. BSS stood by us the entire time and was praying for us. Thankfully, after a year and a half the 2105 State Street property was sold to another Christian ministry from New Haven. This actually was a prayer of the WWBC Saints that the property would continue to be used in the Lord's work. Praise God.

Commended Workers

Jim and Sharon Haesemeyer

It was a sunny Texas morning in mid-September when my wife and I and our three children climbed into a rusty 23-year-old Plymouth. I rolled down the window and then turned the key and started the motor. We waved goodbye to my wife's parents who were standing on the sidewalk wiping away tears. Then I pulled out into the street and turned south—toward the little Central American nation of Honduras and our future field of service. That was thirty years ago.

Remembering the tradition of the early settlers crossing the continent in route to California, I had made a small cardboard sign, "Honduras or Bust," which I had taped to the rear window of the car. From the human perspective we almost "busted." Our journey, which we had expected would take seven or eight days, turned into more than three worrisome weeks of red tape, washed-out bridges, attempted car-jacking, and a rapidly dwindling wallet as we crept through Mexico encountering one set-

back after another. In fact, there came a point when I despaired of ever arriving at our destination. In spite of my faltering faith, God provided in remarkable ways—a place for us to stay free of charge for over a week, much needed financial support from a totally unexpected source, protection when we didn't even realize we needed it, and in a myriad of other ways. It wasn't until mid-October that we finally stepped out of the car at our destination, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, but God had gotten us there.



The Lord's leading to the mission field was equally providential, although perhaps in ways more subtle. My first awakening to the needs on the foreign field happened when I found myself in a small Mexican border town almost by chance. I marveled that a shallow river separated a land which was, at the time, dominated by an immensely powerful Church from another nation in which religious liberty had come to be taken for granted. At almost the same time my wife gave me a book called "Through Gates of Splendor" relating the efforts of the five martyrs of Ecuador in taking the gospel to those who had never heard it. The Lord stirred my heart awake and I began (along with some friends) to make regular trips across the Mexican border to evangelize using my broken Spanish. From there the Lord led me and my wife to take (sometimes haltingly) a step at a time until the

"... pervading everything is God's continual presence, taking us by His hand and leading us ever forward"

day came when I walked into my boss's office and announced that I was going to quit and dedicate myself to teaching Christ in foreign lands. My boss, who was a Christian, said he had seen the moment coming and that he would pray for me. Three months later I was enrolled in the Discipleship Intern Training

IN STEWARDS THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL”

Program for preparation for eventually leaving for the field. And so, our adventure began.

Our years of ministry in Honduras have been marked by some success as well as some failures but pervading everything is God’s continual presence, taking us by His hand and leading us ever forward. Times of need were invariably met by moments of God’s provision. Along those lines, I want to mention my sincere appreciation for the health care fund of Stewards Foundation. When I first arrived on the field, I was jokingly told by the senior missionaries that any proper missionary to Honduras has to contract malaria, hepatitis, and dengue fever. Well, I somehow avoided malaria but I did twice fall victim to dengue fever and once to hepatitis. Among many other things, the Stewards Foundation medical fund helped us to buy the expensive hepatitis vaccine so that our children would not suffer the same illness as I had.

You know, I still have that little cardboard sign that I placed in the window of our car thirty years ago. It reminds me of the unwavering faithfulness of the Lord. How much more will my astonishment be when I look back upon my earthly life from the glories of eternity and marvel at the intricacy of God’s plans and work in even the casual details of this present sojourn. My voice will then join those of all the others who belong to Him in singing the praises of the One who has loved us!

2020 Annual Members Meeting

What a difference a year makes! Last September we held our Annual Members Meeting in Maple Grove, Minnesota. This year, the Members Meeting was conducted virtually by Zoom.

The goal of conducting this meeting in different parts of the country has always been to give the greatest opportunity for as many as possible to attend and be informed about Stewards Foundation. Instead of you coming to us, this year we came to you. Several took advantage of the opportunity to attend the meeting remotely, some from the comfort of their home.

We are very grateful to those that took the time to join the meeting virtually. One attendee was Dan Mearns, an elder and Delegate at Woodside Chapel in Fanwood, NJ. He made this comment at the close of the meeting,

“There are many in the assemblies that receive the “proxy votes” and sign them as a matter of routine without much consideration. We at Woodside Chapel accept the proxy vote and sign it prayerfully, and we do so with “full confidence” in you gentlemen who are devoted to this ministry and make critical decisions before the Lord. You may count on our continued prayers for you.”

One of the primary reasons for the Annual Members Meeting is the election of Trustees to the Board of Stewards Foundation. Trustees are elected to alternating three-year terms so that no more than three Trustees are up for re-election in any one year. Two Trustees were re-elected at this year’s meeting, Mr. Walter H. (Skip) Elliott III and Mr. Aji Baby. Mr. Elliott first came onto the Board in May 1994, serving until April 1996. He was subsequently re-elected to the Board in September 2002 and has served since then. He is currently Vice President of Stewards Foundation. Mr. Baby was first elected to the Board in September 2014. He is the Treasurer of Stewards Foundation. See our website, www.stewardsfoundation.org, for the biographies of all Trustees.

Another important activity at this meeting is reporting on the corporation’s financial condition. At the end of each fiscal year, the firm of Cantrell Pearson & Associates, PLLC, audits Stewards Foundation’s books and financial procedures to produce a financial report based on GAAP – Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. The Board reviews the Auditor’s Financial Report for final approval before it is distributed to the member assemblies as a part of Stewards Foundation’s commitment to accountability.

Stewards Foundation’s fiscal year runs from July 1st through June 30th, so the report at this year’s meeting covered July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. The 2020 fiscal year overview included the following:

Loans:

New Loans: \$1,360,721

Loan Portfolio: 50 Loans with a balance of \$11,462,545

Healthcare Funding:

Gifts to 278 Workers commended from 167 assemblies
Amount: \$276,690 (includes \$500 from 100% Pass-Thru Fund)

Income / Expenses:

Gross Income: \$926,874

Cash Income: \$853,314 (excludes unrealized gains, sale of stocks, gifts, 100% Pass-Thru)

Expenses: \$540,170 (excludes Healthcare Gifts and some expenses)

Cash Income: \$347,013

Psalms 126:3, “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad”

News You Can Use

Virtual meetings have been with us for some time, but Covid-19 seems to have made “Zoom” a part of our everyday lives. While we trust that this is not the “new norm,” there are advantages to this technology.

Perhaps you know the name Stewards Foundation, but not a lot about our history and the services we offer. For example, in our 75 year history, Stewards Foundation has loaned over \$100,000,000 for assembly projects. In addition, over the last 38 years, Stewards Foundation has given more than \$25,000,000 to assist commended workers with their healthcare expenses.

An effort has been made to increase the awareness of Stewards Foundation over the past 7 years by conducting in-person presentations in various parts of the U.S. Now we plan to take advantage of virtual technology as a means of continuing and expanding this effort.

Our first virtual presentation is planned for Saturday, November 7th from 9:00 – 11:00 AM CDT. For those interested in

knowing more about Stewards Foundation, this will be a broad presentation covering some of our history and current services. Please call the office and let us know if you would like to attend this virtual meeting. We will provide specific meeting information once details are finalized.

Future virtual presentations being planned include Stewards Foundation’s loans - from A to Z, and a discussion on things to consider when planning the purchase or construct a building. Specifics on these presentations will be provided once details and dates have been established.

Finally, if your assembly is considering a loan, we would be happy to set up a virtual meeting to discuss specific loan details. This meeting will be tailored to focus on your assembly’s particular situation. Call us if your assembly is interested.



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