

# **A Prospectus**

**The Story of the Morse Church Restoration Project,**  
*A 21<sup>st</sup> Century expression of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church*

One cold morning late in 2004, some friends gathered to pray in the chapel of a local church. During a time of reading from the Bible, the eyes of one of them fell on Jeremiah 6:16, a somewhat obscure verse in the Old Testament of the Bible:

This is what the LORD says:  
"Stand at the crossroads and look;  
ask for the ancient paths,  
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,  
and you will find rest for your souls."

That verse inspired a common thought in the community: what more is needed in modern, chaotic, hectic, and narcissistic Johnson County than a place of rest for weary souls? What if a community could be built at the crossroads of ancient paths and founded on the good way?

Then someone in that prayer group heard that 120-year old Morse Church building, one that had been closed and dormant for 20 years, was being marketed by its owner as a storage shed, an office space, or a home site. Suddenly an idea formed—what if the Morse Church building could be preserved as a sacred space. What if a group of people restored it over a 9-month period and returned to the community it once served. What if the Morse Church congregation was resurrected as a quiet, simple, peaceful place for weary souls on September 11, 2005.

So it is the vision of the Morse Church: to be an “ancient/future” church, one that transcends not only the last 120 years of modernity but also the last 2000 years of church history. In short, we are attempting to live into this dream:  
**The Morse church is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century expression of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church.**

What was the church like in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century? What did they do? Three very important documents have helped inform our vision: the biblical books of Acts and I Corinthians and the historical document called The First Apology of Justin Martyr.

*<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.<sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

--Acts 2:42

*“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.”*

--First Apology of Justin Martyr, AD 90

In these documents, the team discovered that the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church was committed to:

1. Gathering together for worship.
2. Reading the Old and the New Testament.
3. Instructing and exhorting.
4. Rising and Praying
5. Sharing bread, wine, and water
6. Receiving an offering
7. Taking care of those in need

Further, instead of the life of the church revolving around a single, dynamic personality and growing a single congregation bigger, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church grew big by growing small. In other words, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church grew by raising up new leaders who started new services and new congregations. Finally, most ancient texts seem to indicate that the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church met in homes in small groups, communities of people who helped each other grow in their faith, who held each other accountable to Christian principles, and who took care of each other's needs.

So The Morse Church is restoring the tiny 120-year old small building located on Quivira so that it cannot grow; rather, the church must grow by staying small—**multiple people** leading **multiple services** in **multiple places** and at **multiple times**. All our weekend worship services will include Communion; all our people will gather regularly in small groups. And we have made an amazing discovery—that a church with these visions, values, and practices can be quite effective at reaching unchurched people in our community with the message of hope in the Gospel and assimilate them into the church family.

## *Our Vision*

- A 21<sup>st</sup> century expression of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church.
- A church for the largest “denomination” in Johnson County, the 51% of the people who do not go to church.
- Growing big by “growing” small

- multiple *faces* leading
- multiple *worship* formats at
- multiple *times* and in
- multiple *places*.

## *Our Values*

- Devotional  
“You shall love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, and mind.”  
Human beings are created to worship God and to grow in a relationship with God.
- Missional  
“You shall love neighbor as yourself.”  
We exist as a church to be a blessing to the entire world.
- Connectional  
“If one falls, his friend can help him up.  
But pity the person who has no one to help him.”
- Biblical  
God speaks to us through the Word and we want to listen.

## *Our Methods*

- We come together on Sundays to:
  - Hear the word of God (read or recalled)
  - Get encouragement
  - Pray together
  - Share Communion
  - Give to those in need
- We gather in groups (classes, i.e. small groups, and pastorates)
  - For spiritual formation
  - For pastoral care
  - For accountability

## *Our Commitments*

- *Worship*
- *Grow*
- *Serve*
- *Give*

We do “go” to church...we are the church!

# ***Our Commitments***

**Worship**—regularly participate in a weekly worship service.

*“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy”.*

**Grow**—start with the *Alpha* Course and go on into a small group.  
We believe life in community is at the heart of the Christian faith.

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion . But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

**Serve**—appropriate to your giftedness.

*“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

**Give**—proportional to your income.

*“A portion of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord. “*

## ***Our Finances***

The Morse Church is an attempt to be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century expression of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church. The leadership team has studied several historical documents to inform their understanding of how the first century church was financed. These include the Biblical books of Acts and I Corinthians along with the 1<sup>st</sup> Apology of Justin Martyr. The leadership team has determined that the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church was dedicated to using the ***entire weekly offering*** to take care of anyone in the secular community who was in need. The day-to-day operations of the church were funded through direct, regular contributions of the who considered themselves to be a part of the community, contributions that were proportional to their income and usually equal to 10% (a tithe) or more. ***Thus the Morse Church, beginning with all offerings received in October, 2005, will give the money collected to those in need.*** Further, the “Affiliates” of the Morse Church give an amount proportional to their income and the “Disciples” of the Morse Church give at least a tithe. The funds generated by the Affiliates and the Disciples underwrite the small operating budget of the church.

## ***Our Funding***

The Morse Church is affiliated with the Covenant Denomination, is a non-profit corporation in the State of Kansas, and is a federal 501 c (3) tax-exempt entity. To restore the church building prior to the grand reopening on September 11, 2005 and to develop this new congregation calls for a budget of \$320,00. Since the inception of the Morse Church on February 1, 2005, it has received \$35,151.44 in cash donations and \$29,731.60 of in-kind donations. In addition, institutions and individuals have pledged \$118,500.00.

## ***Our Resources***

<b>In-kind donations as of</b>	<b>May 22, 2005</b>	<b>\$ 29,731.60</b>
Kolchinsky Archetects	Renderings	\$ 900.00
J & H Electric	Electrical Supplies	\$ 192.10
Construction Materials Inc.	Lumber	\$ 2,500.00
John T. Van Deurzen	Engineering report	\$ 402.50
Sir Speedy Printing	Printing and signage	\$ 850.00
Hayes Insulation	Building materials	\$ 600.00
Johnny on the Spot	Portable toilet	\$ 231.00
Deffenbaugh	Dumpster	\$ 101.00
New Century Roofing	Roofing materials	\$ 200.00
Glenn Hughes	Bobcat	\$ 845.00
Blue Valley School District	Rent of 3 acres of land	\$ 5,000.00
Info USA	Mailing lists	\$ 3,800.00
City Lighting	Lights	\$ 4,450.00
Harry Westoff	Piano	\$ 3,000.00
Camp David	Graphics	\$ 870.00
Schulewitz Construction	Equipment & labor	\$ 3,890.00
AFS	Copier	\$ 400.00
Church of the Resurrection	Paint	\$ 300.00
Kinney Plumbing	Storage	\$ 300.00
Grossman Painting	Painting labor	\$ 800.00
Olathe Covenant Church	Tables and chairs	\$ 100.00

<b>Cash Received as of</b>	<b>May 22, 2005</b>	<b>\$35,151.44</b>
	February	\$4,610.23
	March	\$9,519.25
	April	\$5,761.96
	May	\$15,260.00

<b>Pledges</b>	<b>\$118,500.00</b>
Individuals	\$48,000.00
Institutional giving (Covenant Churches, area organizations)	\$70,500.00

## *Our Budgets*

### **Morse Church annual operating budget**

Total Personnel Costs	\$93,614.40
Auto expenses	\$6,000.00
Utilities	\$6,000.00
Facilities Costs	\$30,000.00
CE	\$1,800.00
Music	\$2,000.00
Continuing Ed	\$3,000.00
Conferences	\$1,500.00
Ministry Expenses	\$3,000.00
Supplies	\$3,000.00
Property Insurance	\$5,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$154,914.40</u></b>

### **One-time start-up costs \$163,850.00**

Lighting/Electrical	\$7,900.00
Parking/Disabled Access	\$32,320.00
HVAC/Insulation	\$8,950.00
Mezzanine/restrooms	\$46,600.00
Promotion	\$8,690.00
Equipment/Supplies	\$13,000.00
Foundation Repair	\$8,890.00
Building acquisition	\$37,500.00

The restoration portion of the budget calls for \$40,000 to be donated between May 1<sup>st</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. Morse Church thus instigated a new fund-raising initiative designed for individual donors called The Empty Chair. St. Michael's and All Angel's Church in Eastbourne, England heard of our vision for the restoration of the church and the development of a new congregation and has made a substantial matching gift to us. They will donate 100 priceless, 140-year old cathedral chairs for our use in the church if we can raise \$400 per chair in donations in May and June of 2005. Below is a picture of one of the chairs:



## The Empty Chair

An initiative to restore the historic Morse Church, 15431 Quivira, Overland Park, Kansas, 66221

Therefore, we are actively seeking investors to make a donation to The Morse Church in increments of \$400. Our plan is to use the funds to restore the church and to fill each of these empty chairs on September 11, 2005 with a person who does not currently go to church. The Morse Church is a non-profit corporation in the State of Kansas and is a federal 501 c (3) tax-exempt entity. All donations are tax-deductible.

## Why plant a new church in Johnson County, Kansas?

Sadly—and somewhat surprisingly—most people who live in Johnson County, Kansas do not attend church at all. The population of the county is 465,058 with an annual growth rate of 3.1%, meaning nearly 14,000 new people are arriving in Johnson County every year<sup>i</sup>. Currently, 229,211 people are members in one of the 237 Christian churches in Johnson County<sup>ii</sup>. Therefore, 51% of the county's population—nearly a quarter of a million people—is unchurched. Nearly all live within a 22-minute drive time of the intersection of 135<sup>th</sup> and Antioch.

***The churches that currently exist in Johnson County are unlikely to penetrate the unchurched population because they do not target it.*** Most of the existing churches specialize in ministry designed to reach married people with kids. Thanks be to God that since 1990, ten mega churches (greater than 2000 in weekly attendance) have been developed in Johnson County, joining the 10 that already existed. These churches invest the lion's share of their budgets on facilities and on staff to conduct programs for families (parents and kids). During that same period, the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled.

Men dominate the ranks of the unchurched. Although they comprise slightly less than half of the national population, men constitute 55% of the unchurched. The unchurched are also younger than the norm. The median age of U.S. adults is 43, but it is just 32 among the unchurched. Unchurched people are more likely to be single and to never have been married<sup>iii</sup>.

A great deal of research has been done over the last 10 years to determine what methods of evangelization are most fruitful. Dollar for dollar, minute for minute, church planting is by far the most efficient way to reach unchurched adults in an area. Though the reasons are varied, nearly all existing churches experience a dramatic decrease in evangelistic growth after their first decade. Thus nearly all church growth in a congregation older than 10 years happens through transfer.

*Therefore, to reach the unchurched in Johnson County, a church must target younger people, singles, or people who do not have children.*

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<sup>i</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, County Business Patterns, 1997 Economic Census, Minority- and Women-Owned Business, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report, 1997 Census of Governments.

<sup>ii</sup> Data source: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990 and Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000*. Copyright © 2002, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB). All rights reserved. Published by Glenmary Research Center, 1312 Fifth Ave., North, Nashville, TN 37208. [www.glenmary.org/grc](http://www.glenmary.org/grc)

<sup>iii</sup> Source: The Barna Group, ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) <<http://www.barna.org/>>).