

*Learning From our Past, Celebrating the Present,  
Anticipating the Future!*

*Without a vision the people shall perish!*

In the winter of 1999, under the leadership and guidance of Pastor Dr. Edward W. Dorn, key members of the Second Baptist Church congregation embarked upon a journey to fulfill the vision given to its pastoral leader. By November 2000, the organization, fully incorporated within the state of New Jersey and having received its 501-C3 Determination Letter from the IRS implemented -- the purpose -- service the people -- the goal -- allow them to flourish & not perish -- the vision - "Calvary!"

In February 2001, three next generation leaders opened the inaugural dinner of the Calvary Community Development Corporation with the quote of renowned civil rights leader, the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream!" Our speaker, Rev. Deforest "Buster" Soaries, (then Secretary of State of New Jersey), delivered an empowering message inspiring all of us to mobilize, thrust our energies, and lift our voices to ensure the dream, the vision, of the leadership of Calvary and its broad base of supporters would come to fruition.

Each year since 2001, Calvary Community Development has continued to implement its vision with fortitude and commitment. Recognizing the importance of connecting youth to positive messages as they are "our future" leaders, as charged by our second year signature event trendsetter speaker, the Rev. Walter Fauntroy, (former Congressional leader) in 2001-2002 Calvary provided youth seminars addressing the importance of education and working hard to achieve good grades that will work for them. Youth participating in the program were equipped with the knowledge on how to resolve conflict peacefully, alternatives to using illegal drugs/alcohol, advice on other teen issues, and how to celebrate their achievements and achievements of others -- no matter how small. Calvary also provided opportunities for our youth to engage in dialogue with our law enforcement entities. The New Jersey State Police, the Salem County Prosecutor's Office and the New Castle County-DE Police attended workshop sessions to offer encouragement and guidance. These sessions were organized by the Dowe Family. The Youth JOB Training series was held during the summer of 2002 for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 hosted by members of Calvary Board.

Calvary adopted a community service program for persons who have been convicted of crimes and sentenced to do community service. Several ex-offenders transitioned through our program after being referred by the Salem County Probation Department. The clients acting under the leadership of Trustee Chairman, Neal Robinson, not only received credit for community service hours dictated by the Court, but also counseling with the intent to avoid repeat offenses.

In the year 2003, Calvary's foremost challenge was identified as capacity building and funding. The Chairman, President and Board initiated conversations with the late Rev. Herbert "Skip" Howard who desired to lease a local Community Mission located in Penns Grove to Calvary for a minimal fee. Calvary officers formed a task force to review the facilities for use. Since Rev.

Howard's passing, conversations continue with a vision that funding will be received to renovate the building into a transitional housing facility.

Similar to many other young organizations, we continued to face the challenge of financial support, visibility, awareness and relevance of our programs to ensure we were reaching the broader range of community residents. With the help of its first Executive Director, Calvary successfully received its first significant grant to fund upcoming summer youth programs. The Delaware River & Bay Authority provided funding to support its programs and capacity building. We hired a part-time intern, Koyia Osby, to assist in program development and implementation. Along with its expanded board, Calvary continued to march forward implementing its programs for adults and youth.

Computer and office skills training under the leadership of instructor/teacher, Bernadine Jackson were initiated at the computer lab located in the Calvary program office at Second Baptist Church of Pedricktown. Our youth mentoring programs continued under the direction of Pat Jackson. A number of youth participants excelled in school and volunteered in the community. In addition to mentoring, youth also received tutoring in reading and math when requested. Calvary responded to the call of Penns Grove Midget football team by purchasing 50 helmets for the financially strapped program. The Twins league has been serving youth for over 30 years.

Our 2003-2004 keynote speaker, Rev. Reggie Jackson, (President of the New Jersey Black Minister's Council) called on us to reach beyond the border of Calvary to impact change. He challenged us to act to be a force for change when it comes to our future – the future of our youth and the future of a people overall. Calvary recognizes that a quality education is a key indicator to leading a better quality of life. Students glamorize a popular culture that glamorizes instant financial success and rejects academic excellence. Some even possess the belief that certain students just cannot succeed academically. Really, this isn't anything new; what are new are the societal ills that continue to plague our youth, including mixed messages relating to values, norms, expectations and principles. In response, addressing the achievement gap was the topic of a Calvary seminar for parents and students in the fall of 2003. At the 2003 forum, retired educator, Dian "Mickey" Victor encouraged parents to become more involved with their child's education. Calvary received over 100 "Read & Rise" booklets from the National Urban League for distribution to parents of elementary school students. This booklet outlined milestones for parents to gauge their children's academic progress in area of reading and comprehension.

Rev. Benjamin Mike (Pastor, Morning Star Baptist Church), our 2004-2005, messenger, acutely aware that Calvary was on a mission – stated –“to look up, reach out, and reign in” those who dare to answer send me!” The Board Chair and President provide leadership that keeps its members energized; further, the leadership has forged partnerships with many who would come including the United Way, Salem Community College, and Salem County Vo-Tech.

Calvary's 2004 – 2005 programs focused on academic excellence. A free community forum held in 2004 at this very location, the Washington Club, featured an expert panel of educators, business leaders, teachers and prevention specialist. Over 100 attended the event whereby Calvary prompted its panelist and forum attendees to engage in dialogue that would produce results on how to eliminate the achievement gap. Topics ranging from quality teachers, parental

involvement, student responsibility, school violence/community environment, and equity in funding/distribution of resources (fiscal and human) were addressed. Participants received the No Child Left Behind Prayer Book written by Marian Wright Edelman as well as a handbook on parental involvement. The community leaders called upon Calvary to continue its work and suggested future action steps to be realized within the near future. Demetria Saunders, a teacher and Harvard graduate served on the panel along with Dr. Peter Contini, Otis Sistrunk, Darryl Smith, and Jeff Zoehler, Asst. Superintendent of Salem County Vo-Tech Schools.

Parent Pride programming under the leadership of Pat Braxton launched in summer of 2005 featuring former Philadelphia 76er basketball star, Mark Jackson. Salem Community College was the selected venue where a basketball camp was held with Mr. Jackson while parents participated in workshops regarding academic achievement. Following the event, a fatherhood breakfast initiative was held to encourage fathers to be more involved with the child's education. The next series will begin in early April.

In addition to the all of above, Calvary provided support to the Rising Stars Program offered at Salem Community College, sponsored youth attendance at Camp Nehemiah in Salem, provided laptop computers to the Project New Start and Morning Star Youth Leadership program administrators, supported physical fitness and health of track students in Paulsboro, Trinity Elite Track Team, expected to expand soon to Penns Grove, Kingway and West Deptford. Calvary also supported other ventures integral to its adult community, for example, its adult financial literacy series held at the YMCA in Penns Grove, promoting economic opportunity -- budgeting and credit development, homeownership, investment and savings.

More importantly, Calvary's work of as a service provider has now diversified to include coalition building. Calvary is calling all stakeholders of the "village" to action -- to unify and step up the plate to embrace our children, specifically, children of color and from low-income households who face major hurdles to achieve academically, and to create a climate focused on academic success, preparation for higher education and/or viable career options, military or trade. To do this, we must eliminate the gaps in preparation, participation and opportunity.

Today, as we sit in the portals of this South Jersey facility, several weeks after the home going celebration of Coretta Scott-King, the movement is not over...it is just beginning. On the drawing board are plans for expansion, plans for community development, plans for increased educational outcomes, plans for increased access. The work of Calvary is realized through committed volunteer leadership, partnership and civic participation. Sure, times get tough. We face many challenges and learn as we go -- we draw upon His power when we are weak -- for He is able to sustain us and to give us strength, knowledge and wisdom to attain our goal -- we know that a man can plan his way; but it's the Almighty God who ultimately guides and directs his steps.

Come on up to Calvary!

*The Officers and Board of Calvary Community Development Corporation  
By: Edie A. Corbin, Vice President*