

CLIPPING SERVICE
1115 HILLSBORO
RALEIGH, NC 27603
TEL. (919) 863-2079

Carolina
new church
check see it the
see it the
a view
fit

WESTERN WAKE HERALD
APEX, N. C.

Covenant BC
CARY, NC
Raleigh
BA

JAN 06 99



Covenant Baptist's Greg Belcher in front of the downtown church.

Covenant Baptist Church hopes to grow in Apex

By David Leone
Staff Writer

There's a new kid on the downtown block.

Covenant Baptist, a newly-formed "truly outreaching, evangelistic-oriented servitude-leadership" church recently took up residence at 123 N. Salem St.

This December found pastor Greg Belcher and a core group of about 20 followers moving furniture around in the downtown storefront,

willing to hand out literature – and invite in – to any passerby.

Don't let the age of Covenant Baptist fool you though. The church is less concerned with conforming to modern culture than sticking to the scriptures, Belcher said

"It is a new church but the precepts we're built on are 2,000 years old," he said. "The world has got into the church as opposed to the church into the world," church member Ann Pearce added.

See **NEWLY**, page 3

Newly-formed Covenant Baptist Church hopes to grow in growing town

Continued from page 1

But parishioners should not assume Covenant's beliefs go hand-in-hand with traditional church practices.

The small group has ditched the committee-oriented concept for solving tasks.

"We'll try our best to form teams based on abilities and God given talents," Belcher said.

The church holds Sunday services at the Apex Enrichment Center on NC 55 across from the post office.

For such a new church, the small but dedicated group who started it are very organized.

Covenant has a constitution, mission statement and vision as well as literature.

"God has moved us at such a rapid pace," Belcher said.

The church has also begun holding pre-school storytime during the days at its Salem Street office. The first (free) six-week session begins this Friday.

The church will focus on mentoring, disciplining and ministering to youth – with the eventual goal of building a Christian school, Belcher said.

"We want teenagers to know what they hear on Sunday is not just Sunday. We want them to live it. It is important as a parent," church member and mother Dale Johnson said.

Many churches fall short in the goal of continually instilling values into their membership, Belcher said.

"We don't want it to be just a habit, a ritual," Pearce said.

"We're willing to change, innovate, (without compromising the gospel)," Belcher added.

Another aspect of the vision is to increase the number of home bases as the church membership grows. One goal will be a focus on starting new churches, Belcher said.

"We're not interested in growing for the sake of size. We think we have something to offer people. We're not in the business of competing," Belcher said. "Our interest is

not just to grow our church. Our intent is to build God's kingdom."

The vision also includes a drive for all church members to do mission work in the community versus paying for missions work elsewhere.

"We believe everyone is called to be a minister – serving God and reaching out to others," Belcher said. "We intend to get our hands dirty. We can't just be Christians in word, we have to be Christians in deed."

But that doesn't mean the church has thrown away the collection plate. Belcher reported that the weekly giving is about \$1,600.

Covenant's mission statement is short and sweet: "To reach the unchurched and...those no longer attending church in the Cary/Apex/Morrisville communities by (1) glorifying God through warm worship and friendly fellowship and by (2) accomplishing Christ's commands to sow seeds, create converts, develop disciples, and support new church starts."

How did Covenant come into creation?

About five months ago a group of 20 families felt God moving within them, Belcher said. After prayer and deliberation, the group asked Belcher to help them form a church and become pastor.

With education in business, computer science and divinity, Belcher was on common ground with the spiritual group of engineers, planners, brokers, businessmen and others.

Covenant's focus on values is in line with the Southern Baptist conservative resurgence, Belcher said.

Their focus on the family and support of controversial Promise Keepers movement might draw fire, but the group is more than willing to face it.

"We consider it a privilege to support groups like that," Belcher said, adding, "As a growing church we will be persecuted because Satan doesn't want Godly churches to grow."

Carolina

CLIPPING SERVICE
1115 HILLSBORO
RALEIGH, NC 27603
TEL (919) 833-2079

no folder

*month
folder*

**NEWS
CARY, N. C.**

Raleigh Assoc

SEP 25 99

active community service.

291 -

B1

Covenant Baptist

The Covenant Baptist Church is offering "Preschool Story Time" Fridays at 10:30-11 a.m., Sept. 24-Nov. 12.

Story time will involve 30 minutes of stories, finger plays, flannel boards, and puppets with an educational theme from a Christian perspective.

Meetings will be held at the Covenant Baptist Church office, 123 N. Salem St., downtown Apex.

For more information, call 363-6776.

in