

OUR HISTORY

EST. 1930

Rise City Church

1305 Middlefield Rd. Redwood City CA 94063

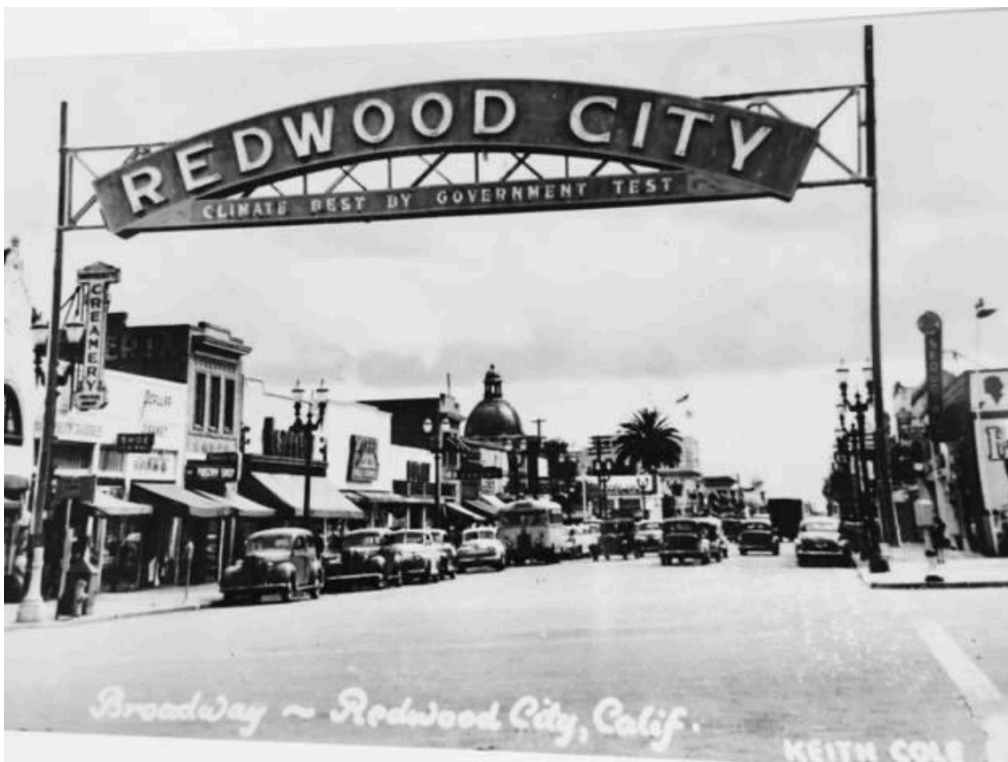
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A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF RISE CITY CHURCH

PART 1: EARLY DAYS – A PENTECOSTAL MISSION

From its inception and throughout its history, Rise City Church has been a church of influence. The earliest seeds of what is today Rise City Church were sown in 1923 by Phillip A. Megna, a Baptist pastor from San Jose. Pastor Megna had “caught the fire” of Pentecostal experience and began his work in Redwood City by preaching in the open air on the courthouse steps. He found good soil here and had enough support by February of 1924 to launch “The Pentecostal Baptist Mission” in a



rented second-story storefront an “upper room” where the Spirit fell in Redwood City. While prayer meetings were going on upstairs in the Wahl Building at Broadway and Main, a cigar store on the ground floor operated a gambling parlor and speakeasy barely disguised as a pool hall. The heritage of Redwood City’s rough-and-tumble past was being directly challenged. Early days were exhilarating, with Sunday services at 2:30 and 7:30 P.M. and

evangelistic meetings every night except Saturday. Newspaper notices invited the public to “Come Feast with Us on the Good Things of The Lord.” After two years of service in Redwood City, Rev. Megna moved on to become a pioneer Assemblies of God church planter in New Zealand, turning over the work to Revs. M.C. & R.H. Henrichsen, a pastoral couple from Glad Tidings Assembly of God in San Francisco. They later changed the name of the church to “The Full Gospel Mission” and they lived up to their name!

In August 1925, the mission was handed over to two associates: Miss Bertha Weltz of the San Francisco Bible Institute; and Miss Myrtle Akin, who gave up her post as a Fresno school teacher to join in forwarding the mission in Redwood City. September 24, 1925, was a significant turning point for the Full Gospel Mission and for Redwood City alike. The Thursday evening meeting ended soon after 10:00. Within a half-hour flames were seen in a warehouse behind the building. The fire made rapid headway and, despite the combined efforts of firefighters from several nearby towns, the Wahl building was a smoking ruin before the break of day.

Just two days later the Redwood City Tribune's editor would suggest that the remains be torn down to allow the extension of Broadway past its previous dead end at Main Street. This extension would become the seminal impetus for continuing the roadway to the shoreline and building the Dumbarton Bridge to carry it across San Francisco Bay. In the meantime, Sisters Weltz and Akin (who had resided in the mission) were now forced to live out of a tent in an open field. They did keep up the work with a full schedule of open-air meetings on the street in front of their burned-out hall. Mr. and Mrs. William Crouch of San Jose took over from the sisters before the end of 1926. For the next three years, with meetings moved to the home of Mary Crown, the Crouches would support the mission by taking in laundry and giving piano lessons, commuting to and from Redwood City to conduct services and continue the ministry. In 1930, another Main Street storefront was rented, with a core group of about twenty people attending who would form the nucleus of a new church.

PART 2: THE OFFICIAL START - A CHURCH IN THE CITY, REACHING THE WORLD

Sister Mae Stephenson, one of that founding band, recalls the precise moment when the Lord called the church into being. Only five women had shown up for the prayer meeting that night, but as they huddled for warmth around an old pot-bellied wood stove, something marvelous happened:



“It was a cold and rainy night soon after we started meeting in the storefront building. During the meeting, Sister Hill and I both received a wonderful message in tongues. I received the interpretation. I remember it clearly:

*‘IF YOU WILL STAY WITH THIS, I’LL BUILD YOU A CHURCH
AND IT WILL BE LIKE A LIGHTHOUSE.’*

And oh, I saw a light from the lighthouse flashing, and a crowd of people gathering in a certain building. I followed along. I wanted to look in the window to see what was going on, but instead, I found myself on the inside. Would you believe it! As I see it today, the church we are in now was there. The preacher looked for all the world like Brother Howard—with a Bible in his left hand and gesticulating with his right hand as he was emphasizing the lesson. And the people all had notebooks and pencils, taking down the message. When the lesson was over, I found myself outside looking back at the church. I saw a red touring car drive up to a filling station in front of the church. A man got out and began to service the car. When he was ready, he got in and started down the road. He drove on and on. I watched as the car appeared going over the hills and I was able to see it. And I marveled at what it meant.”

This is the founding vision of Rise City Church—as a lighthouse and a filling station—officially begun with this 1930 prayer meeting, and organized the following year under the appropriate name of “Ebenezer Church.” For meetings, the new church rented the First Baptist Church, built in the 1870s, which is now the oldest church building in continual use in San Mateo County.

In 1932 the church called the Revs. William and Mary Savidge, both ordained ministers, to be the first pastors. That year the Savidges saw the church properly “set in order” with an initial membership of forty-six people. They then led the church into a formal association with the Assemblies of God as the “Full Gospel Church Assembly of God of Redwood City.” With the Savidges being led to further fresh fields of endeavor, in 1934 the church called Rev. Paul E. Radley to be its pastor. Pastor Radley saw to it that the church was legally incorporated under federal and state non-profit laws so that it could, in fact, purchase property. A non-denominational community chapel building on Roosevelt Avenue was bought in 1935, which became home to the Full Gospel Church until the eve of World War II. Pastor Radley himself relocated in 1938, causing the church to recall the Savidges to a second term as co-pastors of the church until 1942.

Under their return administration, a new piece of property was bought at the corner of Phelps (now Middlefield Road) and Cassia Streets. Rise City Church’s present worship center is a remodeling of the building erected in 1942 under the Savidges. This building is on the precise site of the home of Horace Templeton, the first settled judge of San Mateo County and the original owner of the city block where the church now stands. The judge’s home block included a natural artesian spring that fed a water tower thirty feet high supplying the entire district with water. That tower stood on the spot where our coffee shop now sits.

With a major milestone accomplished, the Savidges once again said farewell to Redwood City, and the Full Gospel Church called Rev. Edward O. Gomes to become their first pastor in their own church building. Pastor Gomes remained until 1951, laying solid foundations of Biblical teaching and building community relationships – establishing the groundwork for larger successes to come.

In 1951, the church called Rev. Wesley Steelberg, Jr. as the pastor, who added a new dimension to the church: a pastor with a growing family, including his wife Erline and three young children. Many new families were attracted to the church, some forming commitments that have now lasted through the third and even fourth generations. Under the Steelbergs the church began to acquire adjacent properties and, in 1953, built its first expansion with the educational building and classrooms.

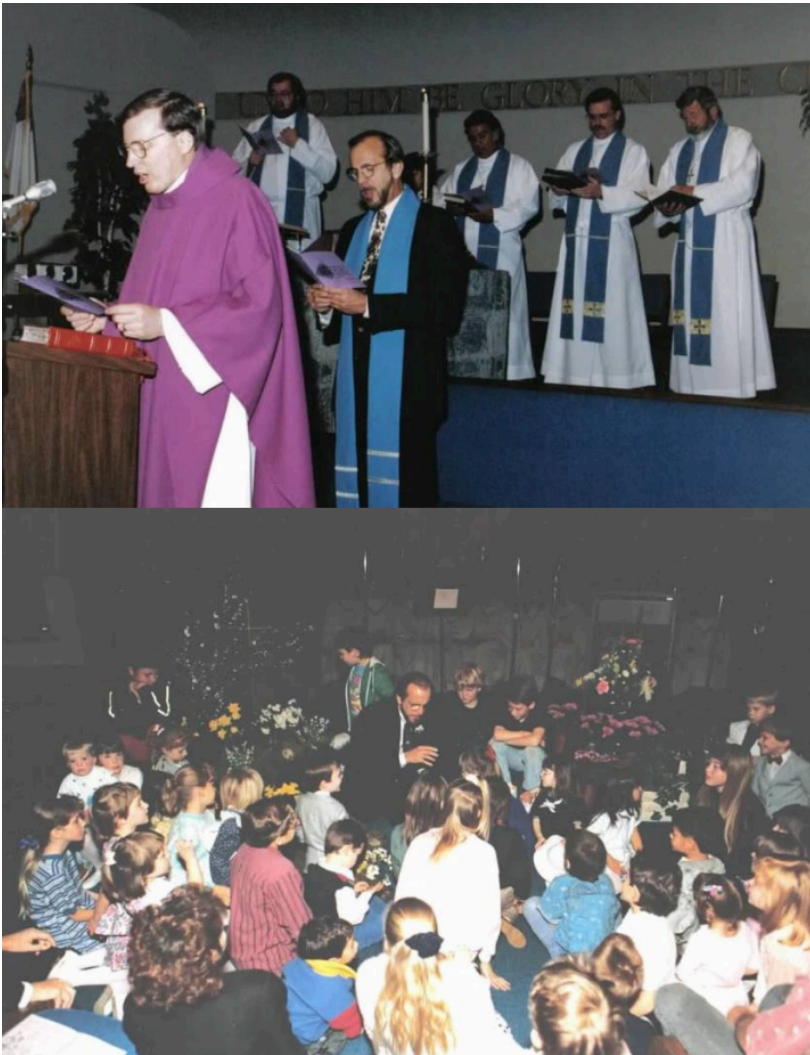
When Pastor Steelberg was called to other work in 1955, the church was more than compensated for his loss by the coming of Rev. Edward R. Scratch to be the new pastor. His wife Enid and children continued the family-based character of the church while reaching out in new ways



with the best of modern technology. Pastor Scratch began a weekly radio broadcast locally, and made use of solid strategies to grow the children’s Sunday School ministry to be the largest in this part of the county. Pictures from those times show the church fairly bursting at the seams, with standing room only.

In 1959, Pastor Scratch’s daughter Darlene married a fellow named Loren Cunningham. The next year, this couple would found an organization known as Youth With A Mission (YWAM), which has been a household word in many church circles globally for over fifty years now. Literally, hundreds of members and adherents of Rise City Church have served with YWAM through the years since then, and for many of them, it became the doorway to a lifetime calling of missionary service.

More than 50 members of our church have been launched into World and Home Missions directly from our altars and doorways, and Missions funding has always remained a major budget category. Under Pastor Scratch, the church continued to expand physically as well as flourish spiritually. More property was bought and, in 1963, a second educational building was built, housing new offices plus a kitchen and fellowship hall on the ground floor, in addition to upstairs classrooms. By 1970, Pastor Scratch felt that he had developed the church as far as he could, so he submitted his resignation.



After a brief trial of an unsuitable candidate, the church called Rev. Richard C. Howard to be its pastor in 1971. The very year that Pastor Rick and his wife Anita arrived, he oversaw the launching of “The Way Inn” a downtown coffeehouse ministry to youth, hippies, and the homeless. The following year, in line with Pastor Howard’s vision of a full-service, full-family, whole-region ministry, the name of the church was changed to “Peninsula Christian Center”. Also, in 1972 the church inaugurated Peninsula Christian Schools, which eventually grew to serve over 200 children per year from preschool at age two through Eighth Grade. This was another major missionary outreach, this time on our own home ground of Redwood City, with students attending from throughout the entire Bay Area. 1975 saw a major remodeling and updating of the existing church sanctuary, offices, and classrooms, while

in the Bicentennial Year of 1976, a major property acquisition was made which was to have far-reaching repercussions. Three-and-a-half acres on the outer margin of Redwood City, near the junction of Farm Hill Boulevard and Highway 280, were purchased for just over \$36,000.

The congregation then planned to develop this land and relocate out of the downtown district. However, the plans continually fell through. The property sat, but not without purpose. God would later use the sale of the Farm Hill Property to indefinitely fund the Farm Hill Scholarship Program

every year. This would bless and help send students to universities across the nation. Peninsula Christian Center had entered into maturity and was living up to its intended purpose as a church of influence and destiny. Etched into the pastoral pulpit were the words “A Church in the City, Reaching the World,” while “Unto Him Be Glory in The Church” was inscribed over the platform.

PART 3: THE MILLENNIA ERA, HIGH HOPES AND DIFFICULT DAYS

As the year 2000 approached, church leadership sensed a fresh season ahead and began preparing to position the congregation for entering the new millennium equipped to reach the rising generation.

With the sale of the Farm Hill property, all proceeds allowed the endowment of the Farm Hill Scholarship Fund and the purchase of three lots directly across Middlefield Road from the church. Since 1992, the owners had hosted the church production of Bethlehem A.D., a regional Christmas-time tradition, that annually recreates the village of Bethlehem on the night of Christ’s birth. Staged in partnership with many other local churches, it has been called “The Disneyland of Nativity Scenes” drawing thousands of spectators every year.

Soon there would be yet another transition. In the year 2000, Pastor Rick Howard was graduated to Pastor Emeritus status with the title of Apostolic Missions Pastor and released to pursue his worldwide ministry on a full-time basis. At the same time, the congregation called Rev. Jeff Langskov to be its new Senior Pastor. All seemed like clear sailing ahead with a growing, family-oriented, mission-focused, and financially stable congregation. But unexpected shoals lay ahead.

After two years of ministry, Pastor Langskov confessed to having committed adultery and was suspended from ministry pending a rehabilitation process administered by the Elders and overseen by District officials of the Assemblies of God. Pastor Jeff relocated rather than returning to office, and Peninsula Christian Center began the search for its next pastor.

In August 2005, Rev. Gary Peters was elected by the congregation as a Senior Pastor. He and his wife oversaw extensive remodeling and modernizing of the property’s primary spaces: the worship center, prayer room, preschool, restrooms, and offices.

Under his guidance, the church launched several new ministries and entered into an association with a number of other outside organizations – most notably Street Life Ministries, which is devoted to feeding and evangelizing the homeless using the church property to reach the homeless of Redwood City. In addition, Pastor Peters invited a number of smaller sister churches without

property to begin using our facilities, thus promoting local church growth and unity between congregations. The name of the church was changed to “Tapestry Church” in 2010.

As the years continued, the church finances began a slow erosion and church membership and attendance were dwindling. In 2012 church leadership undertook severe measures to curb expenditures and began to examine finances in minute detail. In this process, it was discovered that there had been some misuse of funds. In June 2013, the Church Council of Elders & Trustees unanimously requested a resignation from the Senior leadership.

PART 4: A NEW CHAPTER, A NEW PASTOR, A NEW NAME

The search for yet another pastor was underway. For more than three years, the Church Council administered church affairs. Baptisms, baby dedications, and new members would not wait for the corner office to be filled. Attendance and offerings both increased steadily and cash savings doubled each year. The pulpit was supplied with speakers who were largely the pastors and missionaries to whom the church has given birth. In the beginning, nobody anticipated that it might be three years before a new pastor would be found.

The Pulpit Committee, composed of the Elders, Official Board, and a number of other congregants sought a suitable candidate to present to the church as its next Senior Pastor. The word from the Lord was that He was preparing a David in place of our fallen Saul. At the same time, however, Tapestry Church was also being prepared for her new pastor.

Much work was accomplished to repair the wounds of the past and lay a fresh foundation for the future. Scores of pastoral applicants had been reviewed in two full rounds of vetting and interviews when the search took an unexpected turn. Among the Lord’s remarkable provisions during our interim were Derik and Sarah Scott from the Cathedral of Faith in San Jose.

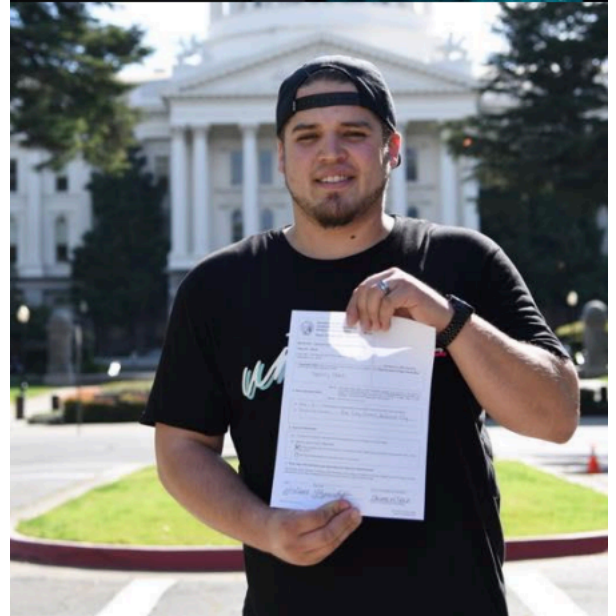
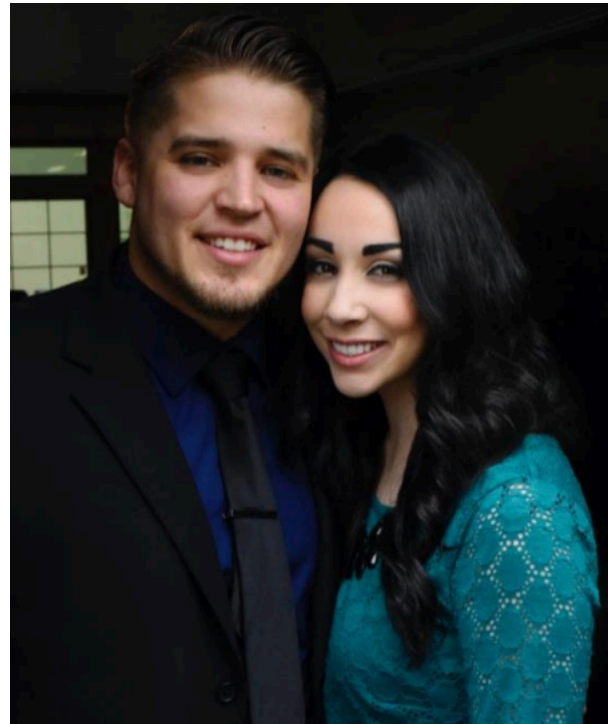


They had initially brought their band to assist us during worship on a regular basis and later became our volunteer Youth Pastors as well. When he submitted his application for consideration as Senior Pastor, his prospects seemed to be a very long shot indeed. A year later he was presented to the church as an approved candidate and on January 31, 2016, was elected as the new Senior Pastor of Tapestry Church.

God's promotion had come to this young shepherd who was simply tending his Father's flock. It was on March 13, 2016, that Derik Scott was formally installed. Pastor Derik's first year in office was largely devoted to becoming familiar with his new responsibilities and duties as the ninth Senior Pastor in the 85-year history of this church. Outward measures of what is usually termed "success" have blessed his ministry with increased attendance and financial giving. Far more genuine and significant successes are manifest in the fruit of his preaching and other work – reinvigorated saints, fresh conversions, and stronger influences from the Holy Spirit. Additionally, a greater interest in church membership exhibits growing long-term commitments to the church.

Entrusted with the rich and enduring legacy of all who have gone before, and supported by the wisdom and experience of a veteran Church Council to assist him, Pastor Derik's ministry brings a fresh enthusiasm and style that is uniquely his own. With a vision for impacting Redwood City and the San Francisco Bay Area through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and with a burden to reach and cultivate the rising generation, Pastor Derik has already brought new expression to the founding principles of this church as both a lighthouse to the world and a filling station for believers.

Appropriately, with a new pastor and refreshed mission, Pastor Derik requested a change of name for the church in the spirit of Philippians 3:13 "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.". On March 12, 2017, the congregation officially renamed Tapestry Church as "Rise City Church". Committed to remaining a diverse congregation promoting the influence of Jesus Christ into the new millennium,



Rise City Church will obey the ancient Gospel call to “Arise, shine; for your light has come!” (Isaiah 60:1) The church pressed forward, eager to see what God had ahead. While Rise City has experienced much in its 90+ years, God was preparing His church for such a time as this.

PART 5: GLOBAL PANDEMIC, FIRE, & A FRESH START

A new name, a new direction. The church was growing rapidly, with over 500 people in attendance at special Easter services held in 2019. Many outreaches to the community continued, God was clearly on the move. On March 8th of 2020, a Sunday of Honor was held to both celebrate and honor Pastor Rick and Anita Howard, the longest-tenured pastors in the history of Rise City Church. It was a beautiful Sunday, filled with familiar hymns, rejoicing, and beautiful words spoken from the pulpit. The presence of God was thick in the room. The fellowship hall was officially dedicated and renamed “Howard Hall” to honor the history and impact the Howard family has made in the life of the church and so many individuals throughout the years.

Just days later on March 11th of 2020, an unexpected global pandemic was declared. A historical moment that would shake the

world. The rise of deaths and people impacted by a virus drastically changed the church as we knew it. Lockdowns, quarantines, food, and essential shortages led to a rise of fear across the world. While some were in a panic, God was still working and moving in the midst of it all. Churches moved services online, and some that met in person were fined and taken to court in various places. The nation seemed to be in chaos during 2020. In addition to a global pandemic, racial injustice led to some of the most historic protests in the history of our nation. In November 2020, the presidential election led political tension to an all-time high.



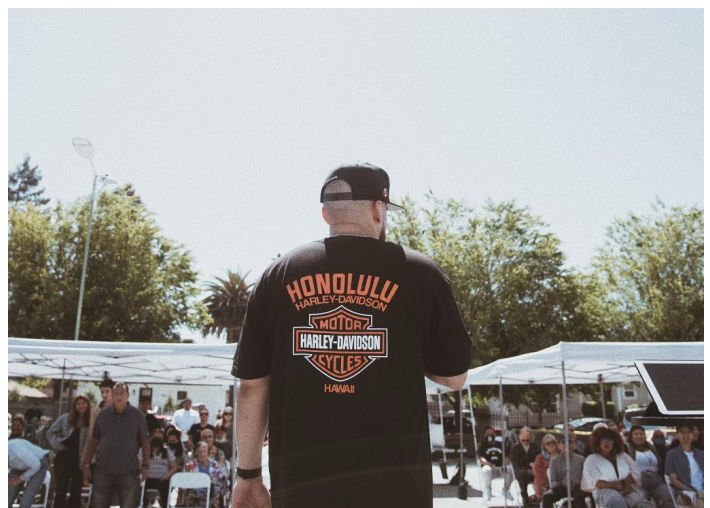
Many places of worship lost all membership completely, some had to close doors due to financial challenges. The average church in the Bay Area had a loss of at least 20% at the close of their fiscal year. By the grace of God, Rise City Church was still moving forward and continued with live online and outdoor services. Staff, volunteers, and families came together in generosity and faithfulness to the Lord. Outreaches were continuing to happen to bless the community and those in need. The birth of our Family Fund came about as the church gave more financially to the community than it had in the previous 4 years. Doors stayed open, the lights stayed on, and Rise City Church miraculously had a break-even year. Once again, Christ the Solid Rock had carried us through.



Finally, on February 14th of 2021, after the Supreme Court ruled that churches were essential, Rise City Church was back in the building. The Mercury News was in attendance as we were one of the first churches to open its doors in the Bay Area. The headline the next day read, “Bay Area worshippers come in from the cold.” However, attendance in church services saw significant changes and decline. New faces and the returning of familiar faces would trickle in and out. Many were still concerned about the safety and health of their families. Slowly but surely, the Lord was calling people back, and things were looking hopeful.

After some time indoors, Rise City Church was faced with a new challenge. On April 28, 2021, a cigarette in the front planter box of the church would cause a fire that would drastically change the course and direction of the church. Flames grew high, and crowds of people came to watch as fire and smoke billowed from the building. A three-alarm fire called on Redwood City Fire Department and neighboring fire departments which were quick on the scene and able to get to the fire speedily. However, the damage had a significant impact and the building was deemed as limited access by the city of Redwood City. Once again, services were moved back outside, and Pastoral staff and leadership began to pray

After some time indoors, Rise City Church



about the next steps.

The finances from the insurance provider would cover some of the damages, however, the building and the entire church campus were in dire need of renovation and restoration. Unbeknownst to the congregation, the Lord had already been stirring a building project since August 2019. The fire would propel the leadership to begin taking quick action to decide what was next. In the meantime, church services would be held in Howard Hall to avoid the rainy season. God made the hall a sanctuary, and once again He began to speak and guide the church toward a focused mission and vision.

After much prayer and fasting, it was decided that a building project would be underway. Finances for the building project would be allocated from the sale of the property referred to as the “Bethlehem Lot.” A town hall was held the week prior to the congregational vote. The official church membership would have an opportunity to vote either yes or no to the sale of the lot that would potentially fund the most massive building project in the history of Rise City Church. On March 6th of 2022, the official voting members of Rise City Church voted yes to the sale of the property located at 1300 Middlefield Rd. It was a bittersweet moment, however, the leadership and majority were confident and excited that the Lord was doing something new in the life and body of His church. With architectural plans underway the mission of Rise City Church stands firm. A church dedicated to disciple the one, raising up the city, and reaching the nations with God’s love and transforming presence. The echoes of a familiar statement etched on an old pulpit “A church in the city, reaching the world” still ring true, but with a fresh take and vision for a new season. The years to come will be a continuation of promises unfolding. His church, a lighthouse, and a filling station.