

Ministry: Moving forward

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prayers of believers who are on one accord.

And yet, Burke said, she had no plans to continue the ministry without her husband after his death.

Sure, they had worked alongside each other to help many of the homeless and low-income families who made their way to the church, then at 1235 SW 22. However, Burke said she mainly worked behind the scenes doing such things as cooking the free meal the ministry offered each Sunday after services.

Burke said it was her son Nathan, then 7, (son Jon was 5) who first asked what would become of the ministry his father had loved. The family was at the hospital reeling from the news of Robert Burke's death when the boy expressed his concern about the church.

Deborah Burke said she thought about all the people who loved her husband and who had come to rely on his comforting presence at the church and throughout the community.

"I think honestly they thought the doors to Inner City would just close," she said.

Burke said she knew that she could not let that happen and asked the Lord for strength to carry out the vision for the ministry. She said she went before the local leaders of the Assemblies of God denomination and asked to become the church's pastor. They accepted her as the ministry's pastor, and Burke said she has been attending seminary classes and will be ordained in November.

The individuals and families at the church made the decision easy.

She said she had to go before the congregation the Sunday after her husband's death to tell them he wasn't coming back. Many of them did not have access to telephones and were hearing the startling news for the first time.

"I saw the hearts of the people. I saw the desperation and need," Burke said.

"The people all wanted me. They just embraced me without a second thought."

Building for the future

Burke said the leaders of Grace Assembly of God, now known as Southpointe Church, called her husband about a year before his death to offer Inner City OKC their church facilities on SW 55 at a greatly reduced price.

She said Pastor Rob was excited about the offer.

At that time, Southpointe was building a new church in far south Oklahoma City and wanted to give another ministry an

INNER CITY OKC

For more information about Inner City OKC or to donate to the ministry, go online to www.icag.org or write Inner City OKC, P.O. Box 83365, Oklahoma City, OK 73148.

opportunity to own their soon-to-be-vacated property.

Two years after Robert Burke's death, Inner City OKC moved to its new home. Deborah Burke said philanthropist and businessman David Green, owner of Hobby Lobby, bought the property from Southpointe Church and gave it to Inner City OKC.

"Every ministry has exploded since we moved," Burke said.

Shortly after they moved in, Inner City OKC volunteers held "Christmas in the Hood," a gift-giveaway in which about 450 Christmas presents were given to needy children, along with free pictures with Santa, clothing, health screenings and haircuts.

The church offers a service at 11 a.m. Sunday, followed by its traditional free meal. A food pantry is offered on the third Sunday of the month. Men's and women's Bible study classes are offered Wednesday evenings. A computer room is open for use by people who have little or no access to computers. Burke said boys and girls groups will begin meeting Sept. 10, and after-school ministries for youths are being planned.

With the expansion came much larger utility bills and maintenance costs. That's where some of the proceeds from the sale of the Rockport addition home likely will be funneled, she said.

Inner City OKC, which relies on individual donations, will benefit from the sale of the house at 12609 Olivine Terrace, along with Reach the World mission efforts in Bangalore, India.

Burke said she thinks about the house and realizes it is just another way the Lord is supplying the needs of the ministry. "It will be an incredible blessing."

Perhaps the house is a powerful metaphor for Inner City OKC, because Burke said her husband had been building the ministry upon the firm foundation of Christ. And thus it will stand.

"He said once we meet their physical needs, we can meet their spiritual needs," Burke said of her deceased spouse.

"He emphasized that when you came here, you became part of our family," Burke said. "He simply welcomed them home."

Proceeds from new home to benefit world ministry

BY CARLA HINTON

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The late Rev. Robert Burke made a lasting impression on Oklahoma City contractor Wayne Long when they served together on a local ministry board.

"He was very jovial and good with people," Long said recently.

Those memories and a desire to aid Burke's beloved Inner City OKC led Long to coordinate a project to raise money for the south Oklahoma City ministry.

Long, owner of Wayne Long Construction, teamed with developer Paul Odom III and other community partners to build a house at 12609 Olivine Terrace. Proceeds from the sale of the home in the Rockport addition will go to Inner City OKC and Reach the World's mission efforts in Bangalore, India.

Reach the World is an initiative geared to fund mission efforts in places such as India, Brazil and Africa. It was started in 2004 by members of several Oklahoma City area Assemblies of God churches, including Robert Burke and his father, Bob Burke, a prominent Oklahoma City attorney, author and historian.

The Reach the World initiative's annual banquet and auction is set for 6 p.m. Nov. 10 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

Long, 62, said he and the younger Burke served together on the board of Reach the World and got to know each other better during one of Reach the World mission trips to Africa. He said he asked Odom to be a part of the house project, and the developer offered a discount on a lot in Rockport, which is a housing addition Burke had expressed interest in.

Odom, 57, said he has supported Reach the World's efforts for several years.

He said all of the net proceeds of the home, less the actual cost of building the home, will go to the designated ministries.

"There's nothing in it for us except the gratification of being able to give," Odom said.

He said homes in the Rockport addition, near SW 119 and Portland, average between 2,700 and 2,800 square feet and sell for \$280,000 to \$360,000. The home on Olivine Terrace is on a corner lot and is priced at \$318,000. Odom said the three-bedroom, two-story house is 2,950 square feet.

Long, a licensed Assemblies of God minister who attends Capitol Hill Assembly of God, said Bob Burke, Robert Burke's father, provided legal assistance for the project.

Long said Robert Burke, who was known as "Pastor Rob," would have loved the project.

"He would be so excited, thrilled," Long said.

Odom said he bought the land for the housing addition from nearby Mid-America Bible College, 3500 SW 119. He said partly because of that, and at his son David's recommendation, he chose the addition's name to tie into Scripture in which Jesus metaphorically discusses building His church: "Now I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18).

Odom, who attends Bethany First Church of the Nazarene, said he named some streets in the development after gemstones commonly known as the "12 foundations of New Jerusalem" that the apostle Paul spoke about in Revelation 21:19-20: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, ruby, chrysalis, beryl, topaz, chrysope, jacinth and amethyst.

Gayle Haggard plans book

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAROL STREAM, III. — Gayle Haggard, wife of disgraced pastor Ted Haggard, plans to write a memoir titled "Why I Stayed," according to Tynedale House Publishers.

"This is my story of choosing to love my husband through some of the most difficult challenges any marriage could face," Gayle Haggard said in a statement.

Ted Haggard resigned as pastor of New Life Church

in Colorado Springs, Colo., and as president of the National Association of Evangelicals after a male prostitute from Denver alleged a cash-for-sex relationship with him in November 2006. Haggard confessed to "sexual immorality."

Haggard has since said that he has worked with counselors and no longer has sexual desire for men.

Gayle Haggard's book is scheduled for release in January.



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