

Chicago megachurch opens

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"I could never get used to thousands of people at a service," Gregory said. "Our church has a personal touch, an intimate feel."

With an old fan sitting in an aisle to cool the small chapel, Pastor John Lang said he wasn't concerned that the fancy new megachurch would entice his congregation to leave.

"If they do pull anyone away, God will send us a replacement, I'm sure," he said. He wished the new church success.

"That's a major acquisition

for saving souls, and I hope they're successful," he said. "The more churches we have — and the less dope dealers and houses of ill repute — the better off our community."

The driving force behind the new megachurch has been Meeks, who as a state senator and chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus, has powerful allies.

When he was planning the design for the church, he consulted with Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf, Pullen said.

Sunday morning, Illinois Senate President Emil Jones and state Treasurer Judy

Baar Topinka both attended the opening services to congratulate him.

Jones said the church would provide not only spiritual guidance, but an economic boost to the area by drawing new restaurants, hotels and other businesses. The bulk of the loan for the new building came from the Evangelical Christian Credit Union.

"This will go a long way toward improving the quality of life on the South Side of Chicago," Jones said.

Some neighboring businesses complained about the

traffic snarling nearby streets as parishioners tried to find room to park, but they still supported the church's efforts.

Pete Tritsardis, who owns the Cal-Harbor diner two blocks away, said he was losing customers.

"They're just driving by because they can't see any place to park," he said. "The church isn't a bad thing, but parking's a major problem."

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The Charlotte Post

Churches go after vacationers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OCEAN CITY, Md. — Churches are increasingly going after the souls of vacationers in resort communities, with many denominations reaching out to surfers on the beach and skiers on the slopes.

In Ocean City, Julie McKenna joined a non-denominational outdoor service for tourists on a whim while biking through the Frontier Town campground on a recent Sunday morning.

She isn't particularly religious, but after sitting down with the 35 or so people at the event organized by Southern Baptist missionaries, she was soon pledging to attend

church services more often.

"This is what I think church is all about," said McKenna, 34, a nurse from Easton. "I belong to an Episcopal church back home, and it's, well, a little stuffy. Seeing this service makes me want to get closer to God."

People are more receptive to religious messages during a vacation because they're searching for a sense of inner calm, said Lynn Davis, director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Central Atlantic Leisure Ministries, which runs missionary programs at resort locations in Maryland and Delaware.

"People are often suspicious of missionaries back home and might be uncomfortable with religion," Davis said after the prayer service at Frontier Town. "But when they're on vacation and camping, they're much more open to new experiences all around."

The Southern Baptists are

just one of several missionary groups and religious organizations in Ocean City and across the country expanding their outreach to tourists in resort communities.

In northern Ocean City, a Catholic parish has converted a meeting hall into a summertime church to accommodate tourists.

The Southern Baptists' Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers now has more than 175 members across the country and is continually growing, according to Marc Johnston, the national resort missionary for the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board.

The group has no statistics on the success of its attempts to make U.S. vacationers more religious, but it has been asked to send missionaries to resort communities overseas, including in France, Venezuela and Argentina.

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J.M. Little, Teacher

I'll never forget the time God awakened me to my lost condition after I had been living a great religious life. The Holy Spirit awakening me to the fact that I was a lost sinner and had never believed on Christ (Eph. 2:1, Lk. 19:10), was the most startling thing that had ever happened to me. After the Holy Spirit awakened me from that death sleep I was in, He convinced me of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8). The Holy Spirit made my hard heart of unbelief a living reality to my heart. He revealed to me that I was born in sin, the sin of unbelief. The blessed Holy Spirit revealed to me that I had no righteousness or goodness in me, but I was a totally depraved child of the devil (Jn. 8:44) and I hated the God of the Bible, His Word and His children (Rom. 1-3). Before all this, I prided myself as a good fellow and one of great faith. The Holy Spirit taught me that I had no faith and I deserved only to spend eternity in hell as He revealed to me my hell-deserving condition as a totally depraved son of the Devil. He showed me I was going astray, away from God. And that I could not find my way back to God. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that as a sinner, I had no claim on Christ and that Christ and Christ alone could be my salvation. He revealed to me my helpless, hopeless, doomed and damned condition. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that God is SOVEREIGN and did not have to save me. Seeing all this made a beggar out of me. I saw that I was responsible for my sinful condition and that God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and damns whom He wills (Rom. 9:18). He taught me that if I were ever to be saved, it would be by the grace of a Sovereign eternal God, the God of the Bible. And there was not one thing in me that could influence God to save me. At the same time the Holy Spirit was showing me the truth about myself, He was growing in my heart a hunger for Christ, according to Zech. 12:10. He made me want Christ, who alone could be my salvation. And when the Holy Spirit made me want Christ above everything under the sun, more than even the blood that ran warm in my body, He revealed Christ to my heart as my Lord and Redeemer, the One who died for me. At my wife's funeral on Nov. 10, 2003, I told the folks there: "Christ died for me." I can sum up my theology in those four words. I have been called in question for remarks I made at the funeral and my secretary's funeral of February this year (2005). I want to tell you, friends, you can cuss me all you want to and brand me crazy all you want to. I know that one day I was a lost sinner with no hope and without God in the world. And then the God of all Grace gave me the effectual call, raising me from the dead to new life in Christ Jesus my Lbrd! I rejoice in Him for saving my poor lost soul. I am redeemed by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is my Lord and Savior.

Church news

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will perform July 22 at 7 p.m.

August 15

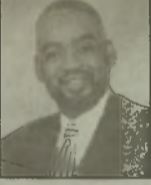
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