

Chamblee's Unity Church Plans Groundbreaking

By LEE ANN HARRISON

Staff Writer

The Unity Church of Christianity, 4146 Chamblee Dunwoody Road, hopes to break ground for a new chapel this July. The \$100,000 facility is being built in an effort to better accommodate the church's 450 members.

"I'm really excited about the new church," says Dr. Jay Dishman, who has been minister of the Unity Church for a total of nine years.

The Unity Church of Christianity is located on a nine and one-half acre portion of the estate which once belonged to Dr. Bruce Fisher, founder of Crawford Long Hospital. Services are currently held in four main rooms of the old Fisher mansion, and are presented

via closed circuit television. The new chapel, which will seat 650 people, is expected to be completed within 10 months after construction begins. The old mansion will be preserved and eventually used as a counseling center.

Dr. Dishman underwent his seminary training at Unity Village, Missouri, and was ordained in 1965. His previous interests included the transportation business and studies in clinical psychology and sociology at Sacramento State and American River Colleges.

Having served in many churches throughout the country, Dr. Dishman seems to have a talent for "getting churches back on their feet." He was with the Unity

Church of Christianity from 1970-75, and was then called upon to help a church in California. He returned to the Unity Church in August of 1978.

"I really love it here," says Dr. Dishman, who hopes to make the Unity Church his last stop.

The Unity Church of Christianity is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and holds worship services and children's Sunday school at 11 a.m. on Sundays. They have a "Creative Living" program, which is a series of classes held on Wednesday evenings. The church also sponsors many speakers; they will sponsor Bob Proctor, a nationally known motivator at the Savoy Restaurant in Chamblee on May 22.



Staff Photo by Paul Eiland

DR. JAY DISHMAN OF THE FIRST UNITY CHURCH OF CHAMBLEE DISPLAYS PLANS
Unveils Artist's Rendering Of Proposed Church Improvements Slated For July

Myrtle Fillmore 1977

UNITY CHURCH IN NORTH DEKALB MANSION

'God Knew What He Was Doing When He Built This Place For Us'

By VIVIAN PRICE

William R. Wallace, Dr. L. C. Fischer and the nuns would be pleased.

They all have one thing in common. They all used to live and work on a hill in North Dekalb that has been a landmark through the years.

Although the acreage has dwindled to eight, the place that has been home to generations of North Dekalbits still stands imposingly at the end of a long, curving driveway on Chamblee Dunwoody Road overlooking Nancy Creek.

Mr. Wallace chose the site for a sawmill and handcrafted furniture there until 1900. His descendants still live in North Dekalb, and several residents still have furniture made by Mr. Wallace.

A physician with the Crawford W. Long Hospital in Atlanta, Dr. Fischer bought the place and turned it into flowerland for the enjoyment of his invalid wife, as well as others who came from miles around to see the terraced gardens.

Since then, the mansion and property have been used for a Catholic school for girls and a private school for boys; and a portion has been developed into condominiums.

RECENTLY, a sign went up announcing that the Atlanta Unity Church of the Daily Word, the first Unity Church in the Atlanta area, had moved in.

More specifically, the people who have moved in make up the Unity School of Practical Christianity.

According to the Rev. Robert T. Means, leader of the group, Unity "is not a religion. It is a positive way of life that works based on Christian principles.

"We teach the laws of God and how to apply them in everyday life. We have Jews, Catholics, Baptists, Lutherans," he said. If someone chooses to be a member, he can. We do not ask anyone to give up membership in any other organization."

Unity probably is most familiar to the public through its television messages entitled "The Word." The church also was the founder of Dial-A-Prayer (451-2011) and was the nation's first publisher of children's books entitled "Wee Wisdom."

The church is non-denominational and non-sectarian and provides its daily prayer guide to all churches. Headquarters for the church are in Unity Village, Mo. Church volunteers, as well as the Rev. Means' are always available to help those who are in need of prayer.

UNITY HAS no dogmas, no creeds. The church has no membership drives and never "passes the plate." The church does not believe in "pledging."

You'll never hear a "hellfire and damnation" sermon in a Unity church, although the church does hold a Sunday "lesson."

The church teaches prosperity -- not only financial, but happiness, health, success -- freedom from worry and anxiety and that every man is a child of God and will inherit the goodness God has to offer.

The Rev. Means, as well as invited speakers, teach classes in prosperity, healing, meditation, numerology, psycho-cybernetics and other topics.

Above all, the church believes that "prayer is the answer and how one prays makes a difference."

The Rev. Means calls it "a do-it-yourself kit" to the good life.

THE UNITY movement began 100 years ago around a "healer," Myrtle Fillmore, to whom the blind, deaf, lame and likewise afflicted came.

On "healing," the Rev. Means commented, "Most people look at healing in an outer way. Doctors -- and thank God they do -- eliminate the effects, so that the person can heal himself. The healing of God is within each and every person."

"The healer is only the channel to arouse the person's consciousness. As a minister and a teacher," he continued, "it is

the policy to get those to come for healing to realize who and what they are, who and what God is and what his purpose in life is.

"It is all in getting the person to understand the power and love of God within is always present. God is life, but most people stop there. God not only gives life, He is life."

Myrtle Fillmore was the first of many women ministers in the Unity Church. They and the men of the church have carried on the two main principles of belief -- that God's law is universal and unchanging and that whatever you ask, believing, you will receive.

The newest Unity Church is currently carrying on a project that the Rev. Means said is visible proof of God's laws and teachings.

Several weeks ago, the church gave some \$3,000 to its members, following a lesson on the Bible's "Parable of the Talents."

Members were invited to take as much as they wished, and, as the parable taught, were charged with multiplying the money by using their talents.

Outwardly, the Rev. Means said, the idea was to raise money for a parking lot. However, the minister's idea was to provide an opportunity for the members to prove God's laws to themselves.

"Most people feel that their money is their money," he said. "There are hundreds of things they might have thought of but never did, because of the fear of investing their money."

"Now they can have the freedom of using the church's money. It makes no difference. It's all God's money."

The money -- hopefully multiplied -- will be collected on July 24. And what if the venture fails? "God never fails," he said.

THE REV. MEANS applies the same laws to life. "Each person is a radiating center of life," he said. "What we radiate is what we receive. The laws of God are exacting and impartial. If you want to be negative, hey, pal, that's just what you will get -- nothing more and nothing less. If you don't like what you're getting out of life, take a look at what you're giving."

"Man, in his own human way, goes about everything backward. He's out there trying to get. He uses the law backwards. If you take, then things are going to be taken away from you. If you give freely, openly, then it will come back to you. If you give to manipulate, then you will be manipulated. God is the banker."

"That also means that we have to be good receivers. Ninety-five per cent of the reason people are not successful is because they are not good receivers. If someone buys your lunch, you should be grateful in love. If you don't accept, you're stopping the other person's prosperity. It's the law," he said.

"God is the unlimited source of everything," he continued. "That's why we don't have to be concerned with finances, government or man-made things. We don't put limits on God. We don't tell him how to do it. We each hold out our cup to God, and He will fill it. Whatever size of cup we hold out will determine what we get."

"Once you find truth, you find freedom," he counseled. "Be the truth you are, and as you radiate, you will draw everyone to you. You (all people) are a living, answered prayer."

"GOD KNEW what he was doing when He had that man build this for us," the Rev. Means said, looking from the balcony out over the terraces and woods.

Renovation is going on, but the minister said that the work is restoration and that the building, with its foot-thick concrete walls, will still be standing for visitors to see 100 years from now.

Two rooms currently are being used for Sunday services, through the use of closed-circuit television, and the church

bookstore has been completed. Church historian Anita Eden is putting together an archives concerning the house and property.

Plans are for a small parking lot in an already-cleared area, with a covered-bridge to the main building. An underground sanctuary is planned facing Chamblee Dunwoody Road.

The unusual idea for an underground sanctuary stems from another Unity belief.

"Man has the idea that he can own things. Man can own nothing," the Rev. Means said.

"God said that everything on earth is here for our use. When man realizes that God will provide, he gets a different perspective on everything."

The sanctuary will fit into the hill in front of the mansion and will be made entirely of glass in front.

"We didn't want to disturb anything," the Rev. Means said. And we wanted it glassed, so people could feel God and nature."

The existing balcony will extend onto the top of the sanctuary and will be a spot for chairs, grass and shrubs. Inside, the podium area also will be finished with natural stone and plantings.

"We want this to be a place where people can come any time," the Rev. Means said. "We don't count heads or money. The church is a radiating center of truth. Sometimes people tend to want to make numbers and money their gods. We feel that if a commitment is made on paper and not in the heart, it isn't worth it."

"Our services are open to the public. The only requirement for membership is that a person take a course in Unity and continue to seek God -- whatever that means to them."