

New spiritual centre at The Key First Nation changing people's lives

"A lot of people's lives on the reserve (The Key) have experienced positive change because of Almond Tree Ministries."

Rev. Allan O'Soup says he is observing his vision for Almond Tree Ministries coming true. When he humbly accepted the donation of the old Covenant Church from four miles south of Hyas in 2000 and had it moved to its present location on the land just outside the western entrance to The Key First Nation, he and his wife, Rev. Carole O'Soup had a vision of what fruit was to come of the seed planted.

Today, the renovated and expanded church building also serves as a school, a Bible College and the main place of worship for the people of the reserve. The original building was more than doubled in size seven years ago.



From left, the buildings at the Almond Tree Ministries consist of a dormitory under construction, Allan and Carole O'Soup's home and the main complex which includes the chapel, the school and the Bible college.

With an enrolment of 21, more than half the school-aged children of The Key attend the school while the Bible College is assisting adults develop a closer relationship with Jesus and assisting all in

bettering their lives, said Rev. Allan O'Soup.

There is much to be said about the cycles in life – from a seed to a tree bearing fruit and back to a seed – and Allan proudly offers the example from his own life. About 30 years ago, he and his wife attended the Faith Alive Bible College run by Dr. David Pierce in Saskatoon. That experience led to his ordination in 1986 and Carole's shortly afterwards. Today, Pierce visits the Almond Tree Bible College regularly as a guest speaker.

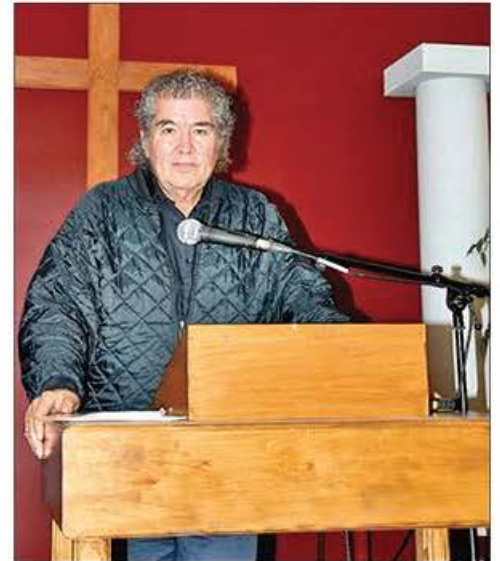
"I like to see people empowered by the word of God," said Pierce. "It is both a privilege and an honour to be asked to come here to teach."

Pierce and O'Soup agreed that natural cycles of God are a wonder. O'Soup had the church, school and college built because of a vision and the many wondrous things that are now happening "are the fruit of that labour."

"This is amazing," said Pierce. "Thirty years ago, there was nothing here and today it is a spiritual centre."

Catherine Welland, who is originally from Nova Scotia, is the director of the college. In working with the adults in her classes, she speaks of "foundational truths in preparing and supporting people in their everyday lives." For those who want to learn more or feel they have a calling into the ministry, she is ready to do more in-depth teaching.

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Rev. Allan O'Soup says he like to do old-time gospel preaching when he takes to the pulpit. Many of those who have heard him preach over his 28-year career since being ordained have invited him to share the word across North America, Europe and even in Asia.



Principal Carole O'Soup was working with Paris O'Soup at the Almond Tree Ministries school.

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In the college's short six-year existence, already two students have been ordained – Jamie Desjarlais and Roxanne Brass – and Sidney Keshane has become a licensed minister, said O'Soup.

Numerous other adults will provide testimonials that they have grown away from lives of drug and alcohol addictions to becoming faithful followers of Jesus, he said.

Having a travelling ministry for 17 years before returning to his home base on The Key, took the O'Soups across Canada, North America and even overseas to countries such as Ukraine, Ireland, South Korea, Israel and England.

In 2000, when they decided to settle down in one area, they were moved by another vision of starting a Christian training centre. Allan had a strong connection to the Covenant Church in Norquay where he had taken his Sunday



Most of the students and the staff gathered for a group picture at Almond Tree Ministries school. The students are from Kindergarten to Grade 11. The principal is Carole O'Soup and the class monitors are Stephen Bryant, Denise Brass, Dale Brass, Ryan Brass and Tasha O'Soup.

school lessons for 10 years as a student. Through that connection the old country church from south of Hyas

was donated.

As their parish grew, they could see a need for a local school and Carole went back to school to earn her degree in education. She became a qualified teacher and the Almond Ministries school became a reality later the same year.

At first the school was only registered to teach children from Kindergarten to Grade 8. But last year, the school was registered for instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Next year, everyone is looking forward to the first student graduating from Grade 12, said Allan.

The students come to the school because they feel more comfortable being in their own community, he said. The numbers continue to grow – last year there were 14 students and this year there are seven more enrolled.

The school uses the Accelerated Christian Edu-



Stephen Bryant, a class monitor, was helping Austin Keshane, a Grade 9 student, with his studies.

cation curriculum, which is a standard for many Christian schools across the province, said Carole, who is the principal of the school. Each student learns at his or her own rate and there is plenty of time for one-on-one tutoring.

It is the same curriculum that was used in the Parkland Christian Academy in Canora through the 1980s and 1990s, said Allan. In fact, two of his children attended the Canora school founded by Pastor Keith Eberhard. The results were so impressive that it became Carole's vision to run a Christian education school.

The emphasis is on Christian values with strict controls over behaviour that may include bullying or swearing, said Allan.

The whole ministry continues to grow and the latest addition currently under construction is for a dormitory that can accommodate 16 persons, he said. It will have multiple uses but mainly Allan can see it being used for visitors to conferences or for adult students of the Bible college who may arrive from different parts of the country.

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Using the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum, students work in cubicles learning the material at each person's own pace.



Myrna Ruthven, a dental therapist with Health Canada, and Merle Mondair (left), a dental aide with the Children's Oral Health Initiative (COHI), were doing dental screenings at the Almond Tree Ministries school last week to visually check the students' teeth. Fluoride treatments and dental appointments are then made at the Norquay Health Centre. Sarah Keshane opened wide to have her teeth examined and waiting their turn in the background were Israel Gamble and Shavon Papequash.

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The new building will be heated by the same outdoor furnace which is used to heat the main complex, Allan said.

Financing big projects such as the expansion of the church and school and now, the dormitory, is not very difficult, he said. Almond Tree Ministries is blessed with many regular supporters who give generously to these projects.

"The support comes from the faith in God in what we are doing."

In the future of Almond Tree Ministries, Allan sees much more potential on

the horizon. The name for the ministry comes from several passages in the Bible, he explained. In Jeremiah 1:11 God shows the author a vision of a branch of an almond tree. The tree is significant in the Middle East because it is the first in the season to produce. In Jeremiah 1:12, God explains that following his word will produce the quickest results.

"I will hasten my word to perform it," states the scripture.

"I want God to do quick work among the people," Allan said in explaining the name of his ministry.

In describing the at-



A renovation and expansion project seven years ago allowed for a new chapel to be built. Revs. Allan and Carole O'Soup were very proud to show the growth taking place at the ministry to Dr. David and Joyce Pierce of Saskatoon. Dr. Pierce had taught both O'Soups in Bible college in Saskatoon about 30 years ago and he now comes to Almond Tree Ministries to teach at the Bible college founded by the O'Soups.



When the former Covenant Church from south of Hyas was donated and moved to near the western entrance to The Key Reserve, it became the centre of Almond Tree Ministries. It has since been renovated and greatly expanded to include a school and a Bible college.

traction to his preaching style, he says: "There is the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is old-time Bible preaching – old-time gospel preaching with a lot singing and praise to the Lord. It's very Pentecostal."

The success experienced is a symbol of "trusting the Holy Spirit to bring the people in and He does."

The church is open to everyone, but it is mainly people from the reserve who are members. How-

ever, there are often visitors from the surrounding area, especially when there are special events. For the "Stand For Israel" weekend, there were visitors from Norway, Canora, Kamsack, Yorkton and various other centres.

Also very popular are presentations from visiting ministers from across North America, he said.

In his years leading the new ministry, Allan said he has performed at weddings, funerals, baby dedications and water bap-

tisms. When it comes time for burials, the cemetery at the historic Anglican Church grounds on the reserve is still used.

While he likes to focus on the church and training centre, Almond Tree Ministries continues to offer spiritual leadership at various locations throughout Canada, wherever he and Carole are invited to preach.

A major focus is doing a lot of prison ministry, Allan said. He and Carole often go to the Prince Albert

Penitentiary and the Regina Correctional Centre. He has been doing a prison ministry since 1991.

Four banners which have a place of prominence on the side walls of the chapel were made by prisoners of the Prince Albert Penitentiary, he said. "It was their gift of appreciation."

Almond Tree Ministries is an affiliate of Faith Churches and Ministries of Canada, the organization which ordained O'Soup in 1986.

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Four banners made by prisoners in the Prince Albert Penitentiary were hung in places of prominence on the walls of the chapel at Almond Tree Ministries. The banners were a gift of appreciation for the work that Revs. Allan and Carole O'Soup do in their prison ministry.



Revs. Allan and Carole O'Soup posed for a picture with Catherine Welland, director of the Bible College.



The students at Almond Tree Ministries school may represent all the grades from Kindergarten to Grade 11, but when it is time for recess, they become one group enjoying their time together.



Almond Tree Ministries continues to grow with the vision of Revs. Allan and Carole O'Soup. The latest addition is a dormitory being built on the property to serve students of the Bible college and to offer a place to stay for guests at seminars and special functions. Allan O'Soup, right, was showing the new project to Dr. David Pierce of Saskatoon, who is teaching at the Bible college.