



August 30, 2009

God is at work in this church.

In 2006, with a handful of believers and hearts filled with passion, God birthed this church. He planted in the heart of our parent church, Sonrise, a desire to expand the gospel into the Pittsville / Willards / Parsonsburg / Whaleyville / Powellville area. Their dream was to start a brand new church that targeted the lost and those who for a variety of reasons had given up on traditional church. A church where everyone is accepted and can hear the gospel presented in a creative, clear and compelling manner.

God brought just the right people to seed the new church along with the generous financial support of Southern Baptists and our parent church.

Under the leadership of John and Kim Coleman, God blessed us with some initial growth, and we have baptized over 50 new believers since our beginning! God also raised up a core leadership team to help steer us into the future.

Although we have seen some successes, we have also seen some serious roadblocks to our survival. As these roadblocks intensified this year it became evident that GT would have to make some difficult decisions regarding our future.

Over the last few months we have explored several options but found doors closing at every turn. In a time where our very existence was called into question, God threw us an unexpected opportunity.

We found ourselves at the intersection of our need and another church's dream.

Oak Ridge Baptist Church in Salisbury is a church reborn from the ashes. In 1997 it was certain ORBC would close its doors and cease to exist. But just when it seemed all hope was lost, God did a miracle! Under new leadership and a fresh vision, ORBC grew from 35 weekend attenders to now over 1,400! They are a church of like-minded members who are also passionate about reaching the unchurched for Christ.

In 2008, God planted the dream in the leadership of ORBC to become a multi-site church with off-site campuses using video sermons combined with live worship and a campus pastor.

The GT leadership team along with our pastor made contact with the ORBC team and opened a dialogue with the ORBC leadership to explore the possibility of uniting GT with ORBC to become ORBC's very first off-site campus. This historic move would be the first of its kind on the Eastern Shore and send a positive message to our communities that churches can come together to accomplish the Great Commission.

After long hours of prayer, discussion and godly counsel, the GT leadership team, have made the decision to unite our congregation with Oak Ridge Baptist Church as a satellite campus.

Over the next several weeks we will begin the process of transitioning GT to become ORBC-East Campus. Pastor John will be stepping down as the pastor of GT and a new campus pastor from ORBC will be transferring here. In addition, the ministry staff of ORBC will be working closely with the ministry volunteers of GT.

Just as our Leadership team had lots of questions we are sure that many of you will also. Therefore we are hosting a member forum on (we can make this another day if you think another weeknight would be better) Wednesday, September 2nd at 7:00pm at the Family Center.

We believe this is God's hand and we are excited about this awesome opportunity and new chapter in our church's history. Please pray for Pastor John, Kim and the entire GT leadership team as we begin this exciting phase.

God has been at work in this church. God is at work in this church. God will continue to work in this church.

Sincerely,
The Gathering Tree Leadership Team
& Pastor John Coleman