



#### A VISUAL TIMELINE

- 1) Early Monday morning Bud Jones and Marv Diller, two of several professional contractors on the Carlisle team, make last reviews of the building plans as the team gets ready to build.
- 2) Waiting for further instructions, several team members fill their nail aprons in preparation for the first day's building.
- 3) By Monday afternoon teams are lifting outer wall frames into place and beginning on the inside walls structures.
- 4) By mid-week the team is working on framing and covering the roof.
- 5) Near the end of the week, the team poses for a group shot in front of the fully framed church.
- 6) By November, several other visiting teams and specialists have got the church looking good on the outside. New Vision teams were scrambling to finish the inside to take occupancy by the end of the year.

Photos by Steve Witt (New Vision), Chuck Seiber and author

For at least a dozen years now, a couple of bus loads of people and a couple of van loads of tools and supplies roll out from Carlisle (Pa.) BIC Church every June and head for a week-long building project in some other place. For many years they have helped with the building of houses in South Carolina, but a couple years ago they were challenged to help with building a new house of worship for New Vision BIC in Wisconsin.

Since being invited to come and watch that week, I have been fascinated by the active model of a partnering church it exemplifies to anyone who gets to see it. Even passers-by were drawn into the activity and the unmistakable camaraderie evident there. One, an off-duty carpenter, even came back to help.

By the time the project was completed in December of 2002, no less than 15 churches had come to take part in the outreach to this sister congregation. And all of them reported having been built up themselves—just for having participated.

This summer, the Carlisle group has again

set its sights on another church-building trip, this time heading for Sauble Christian Fellowship in Sauble Beach, Ontario to help with their project to build a new sanctuary.

#### BUILDING FOR OTHERS BUILDS THEM UP

Ron Manley, one of the Carlisle group's original organizers, notes that in some ways the activity of getting far away from Carlisle to work on someone else's project is somewhat intentional toward an effort to build up their own church. He says the group needs to retreat away from the tasks and callings at home in order to better re-enforce interaction within their own group. Part of the dynamics of their week-long trip together is the time spent in interaction together.

In general, people at any church only get to interact a little bit with each other mostly at church meetings, forced to working within the parameters of scheduled worship services and other church events. Carlisle BIC has now grown large enough to make the move to a fourth Sunday morning service, making a trip like this an important outing for those in the

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## "Leaders" weren't the leaders

One of the more interesting aspects of what came together in Wisconsin is that it hinged on several people—people in fairly divergent places and on different paths—all following a lead of the Spirit.

More notably, many of the people who saw the potential for Carlisle to work at this were not the people who would in turn make it work. Instead, it was people who saw the potential in others and then prodded that gift or ability into action.

Most notably of all, none of these people were pastors or even the designated leaders of the church. Though Carlisle's pastor (and his two daughters) were along on the trip, he immediately points to others when asked about the overall effort.

It turns out the Carlisle team was initially conceived, and is still guided by the vision of two men in the church who didn't themselves necessarily have the skill to take on the huge building projects the group now regularly does, but who saw the potential to do it within their church family.

"We were the 'shoulder tappers,'" notes Ron Manley of the initial efforts of he and Chuck Seiber. "We looked around at the potential within our church and

we thought 'we can do this.'" So, Manley turned some of his expertise from work in agricultural sales toward making a pitch to recruit people. Manley also notes he had worked with Mennonite Disaster Relief in 1985, which probably further prodded his vision for this particular kind of work.

The teams, usually around 100 in number, are comprised of several construction professionals from within the church or associated with it. The range of people who go along to help on these trips includes young and old, skilled and un-skilled, builders and support staff, but *all* take an active role in the effort.

Chuck Seiber, who helped with the initial effort and was the chief organizing force behind the Wisconsin team project, is usually joined by his wife Arlene, who helps supervise the kitchen and support crews.

In fact, it's noteworthy that a significant part of the teams that go each year are the support team for the building crew. On the 2002 trip, approximately 20 of the 100 people on the crew were there to help cook and clean—making meals and scheduled snacks for the workers, and processing the several pounds of laundry generated by the sweaty crew each day.





# up the church

church to get to better know each other. (With several separate services at their one church, many along on this trip are meeting each other for the first time, in spite of all regularly attending the same church!)

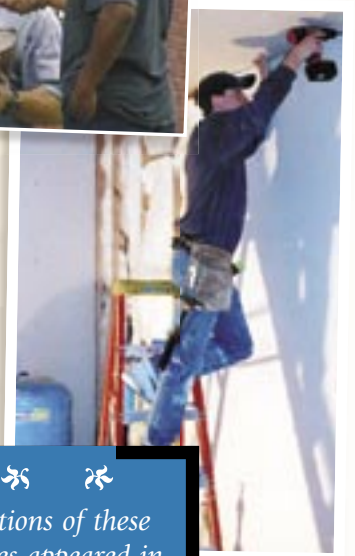
Manley also notes that youth have always played a significant role in the trips. For one thing, they are willing and able workers. Beyond their capability and willingness, though, the youth have also proved a most important part in recruiting their parents to come along. Several families now take a week's vacation to come to these together.

Working together as a church family to put up buildings over the years has brought together a diversified set of gifts and skills to help others, but more importantly, it has helped build up the body of their own church, as well. The details of raising a larger church building instead of their normal

*In Him the whole building  
is joined together and rises  
to become a holy temple in the Lord.  
And in Him you too are being built  
together to become a dwelling  
in which God lives by His Spirit.  
Ephesians 2:21-22*

housing projects added several new challenges to their work, but among the team's several resident construction professionals are a variety of backgrounds, so the stretch may have helped new gifts emerge to the forefront on a project of this size and scope.

Plus, the newly added element of putting this group's skills to work actually building churches only makes the trip all the more blessing for many on the team.



## Building up one church

## builds up several others

**"Wow!"** What an experience to be involved in God's plan for Waukesha!" noted Alan Roper, coordinator for the work crew from Mt. Rock BIC, in Shippensburg, Pa. "I could write about the details for several more pages, but I know you wouldn't have enough space for a lot. The nine of us as a group took an entire Wednesday night service to tell our congregation our experience with the New Vision Church. I'm starting to cry again even now."

No less than 15 different churches had a hand in helping out in the effort in Wisconsin, even more impressive when you consider that at least half the BIC Church's regional conferences were represented in that list. In many ways this is a project that has not only touched the brothers and sisters served in Wisconsin, but has touched the many who came to serve.

"The original intent was to do something in the physical realm – to go and 'help'," continues Roper. "The result was a spiritual benefit that I can hardly explain. The reality was I brought more back than I left in Waukesha. Our group got to stay with three of the families that belong to the New Vision congregation, and we built relation-

ships with them that will last an eternity.

Indeed, it seems the spirit of fellowship on the project was contagious, even for the hosting church family. New Vision's pastor, Matt Lewis, said, "I was really blessed by the fact that as they left, the testimony of many of those who came was they got more than they gave. It's cool, because for a lot of those churches, this was the first time any of them had done a short-term missions trip like this. So I hope it becomes an on-going thing for them.

"I hope that we re-capture that part of our heritage that says when a church is in need, the other churches gather together for support," added Lewis. "That's really the essence of how our giving is supposed to work, so I hope that we can continue to do that more in the future."

Lewis has noted strong interest in joining the Carlisle team this June in Sauble Beach with a team from New Vision, providing a chance to rekindle the family ties established two years ago by working together again side-by-side, this time in outreach to another member of the family.

Portions of these stories appeared in 2002 in *Visitor*  
See the full original articles at [www.bic-church.org/visitor](http://www.bic-church.org/visitor)

Photos above from New Vision and Joseph Fox (Nappanee)