

# SEASONS OF CHANGE IN

Story by Jim Culhane and Christmas McGaughey  
Photos by Mikayla Mackaness

# CHARLESTON



Paul Charles, bottom left, founding pastor of CC Charleston, prays with the worship team before Sunday morning service. After prayer and seeking God, he felt God moving him out of leadership.

## Steps of Faith

After 12 years of prayer, sweat, and tears, Pastor Paul Charles of Calvary Chapel Charleston, SC, is passing the baton to a young man he disciplined in the faith. The

dedicated pastor planted the church and supported his family by delivering pizzas and laying tile for 10 years before the ministry supported him full-time. Now, he and his wife are stepping back in obedience to

the Lord to let the next generation take the lead.

“I’ve been considering Moses as he turned the leadership over to Joshua, and how Paul eventually turned the Ephesian church over

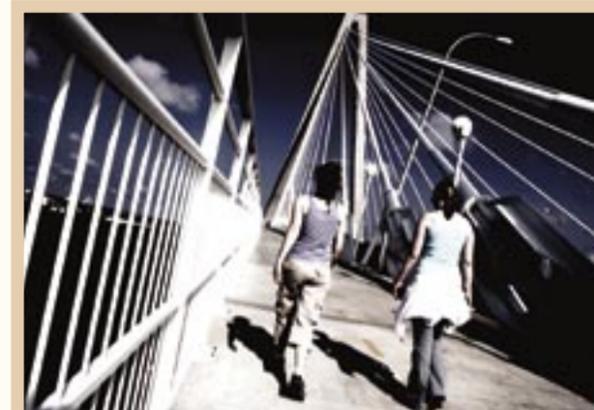
to Timothy,” Paul said. “I think the Lord wants to develop us so that we don’t become too important to ourselves—or think we’re too important to others.”

While he cares deeply for the flock at CC Charleston, Paul said he is not anxious. “When you know they are going to be well taken care of, you don’t fret. You’re not as anxious as you could be,” he said. He and his wife, Nancy, are trusting in the Lord

until He calls them elsewhere. “I just know that the Lord has given me this next step. I don’t know what the step is after that,” Paul said. “God often works that way: When we’re obedient to that first step, then He provides the next one.”



Outside of the church building, believers continue in fellowship for several hours.



Lindsay MacLeod and Smith Podris, who fellowship at CC Charleston, walk across the New Cooper River Bridge.

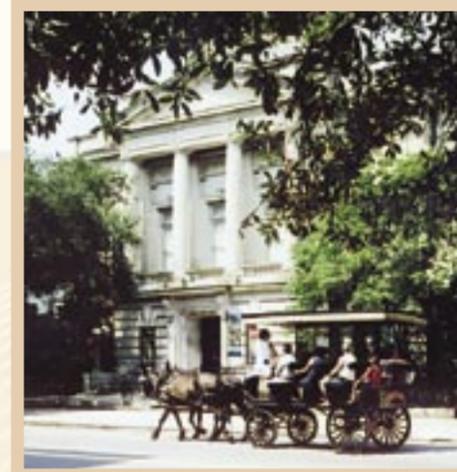


photo by Cassie Farrow

Families enjoy touring the historic city riding in horse-drawn carriages.

Earlier in the year, Paul began to sense the Lord might be leading him to step down from pastoring the Charleston fellowship. “One of the main reasons was, through prayer and observations, I believe that the church needed a new direction; and for that to happen, I needed to get out of the way,” he said. “Secondly, though I’m not burned out, I’m tired. Full-time ministry is not an easy thing. I know we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13), but I sensed He wanted to do more in the church, and He wanted to use someone else.”

For months, Paul sought the Lord through prayer and then discovered Nancy had been sensing the same thing. During that time, Paul got a call from Sean Nelson—a young man who had rededicated his life to Christ at CC Charleston and served there for several years. Sean, 32, said he had a desire to come back to Charleston and pastor a church. “It was just so clearly the Lord’s will and His timing,” Paul recalled. “It’s a huge blessing that the congregation and the board know him well and that he was at our church for years.” Sean had been serving at CC Fort Lauderdale for a short season, believing one day God would call him and his wife, Sandi, to full-time ministry.

### Ups & Downs of Ministry

“I’m not discouraged,” Paul said. After guest teaching at another church, Paul said he realized he was not as effective at CC Charleston as he used to be. He added, “And if you’re not effective with your own people, why are you there?”

“There are some things I’ll really miss about ministry, and some things I will not,” he said with a chuckle. “There were days when things were tough, flat out.” The fellowship grew slowly as Paul worked to support his family of six. A few years ago, several people from the fellowship left to attend a new Calvary nearby, then a few years later returned when the two churches merged together. Sean was also there during that time, helping with the transition.

“The best thing about ministry is the Lord,” Paul said. “One of the greatest things—and most difficult things—is working with people: The hurts that can come along



*Pastor Paul's youngest child, Cara, plays with children in the nursery.*



*Preschool children watch a puppet show performed by Carissa and Steve Reeves.*

when people step out of your life. The worst hurts are from mistakes that you make or when you hurt people’s feelings—handle something a little too hard or let something go a little too long—that can be tough.” Paul said he and Nancy are open to whatever the Lord may have for them after their season of rest and drawing near to Him. Meanwhile, he will work a regular job to support his family as they pray for God’s direction. “It’s been on my heart to pastor a church that is hurting,” he said.



*Worship during Sunday morning service is often intimate and low key.*



*A surprise reunion, as Lindsay MacLeod, middle, a worship leader, gives Logan Hill, son of former pastor Greg Hill, a huge hug before service. Sean Nelson, right, visiting from Florida with his family, was the guest speaker. He is now pastor of CC Charleston.*



*Nicole Ramson, center, tells Lindsay MacLeod, left, and Carissa Reeves, right, about her upcoming mission trip to Montserrat, West Indies.*

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Pastor Paul Charles

### Mentor and Example

Those blessed by Paul Charles’s ministry call him a mentor and example. “One of the most amazing things about Pastor Paul is his approachability. Whether you need to have a serious conversation, share some

exciting news, or request a prayer, people feel they can talk to Paul. I think that represents the character of Jesus Christ,” said Pastor Sean. After Sean rededicated his life to Christ, Paul disciplined Sean and a few other young men—taking them through the pastoral epistles and teaching them biblical principles of ministry. “There I was—a guy with purple hair and nose rings—saying, ‘God’s called me to minister and teach the Bible;’ and Pastor Paul never once told me to take out my nose rings or change my purple hair. All he did was take me to the Word of God and teach me how to be a disciple of Christ. Eventually God changed my heart.”

Worship leader Nate Pollard first came to CC Charleston eight years ago when Paul invited him to a home fellowship. “Pastor Paul had time to pour into me,” he said. “I really got to see him live out his life—not just preach on Sundays. That had a huge influence on me. It definitely gave me something to pattern my life after.”



*Left to right: Jessica Boller, Amy Boller, and Jenny Ditullio fellowship after service on Sunday morning.*

### How It All Began

Paul recounted how God called Nancy and him from Southern California to South Carolina. He had been working at the CC Costa Mesa bookstore when a Charleston woman called to request a Calvary Chapel there. He had been praying about starting a church. “When I hung up the phone, one of the girls that worked with me told me, ‘My brother’s friend has been praying for four years for a Calvary to start in Charleston.’”

After much prayer, Paul flew to Charleston for 10 days. “The Lord just opened up door after door after door,” Paul says, “The only door that didn’t open was a job, but we just knew the Lord was going to bless. Money was given, so we were able to



*The youth group, lead by Ben Lusic, right, meets in another room during Sunday morning service.*



*Prior to stepping down as pastor of CC Charleston, Paul Charles opens up Sunday morning service with announcements and a prayer before worship starts.*

establish ourselves and the church. Shortly after that, I started working for a painting contractor, then Domino’s Pizza, and doing tile and stone work until the church grew large enough to support us.”

CC Charleston started in 1994 and has a flock of more than 100. Assistant Pastor Ben Lusic explained, “Charleston is open to religion; there are lots of churches, tip of the Bible belt. Lots of people think they’re saved because they’re religious. It’s difficult to reach these people.”

### Local Ministry

Ben also serves as youth pastor. Though the group is small, Ben says “some of the youth have started to get a love for the Lord and are growing.” Two girls rededicated their lives to Christ, and one is entering Bible College. Ben related, “She understood [Christianity], but thought the world had a lot to offer. Now she’s telling the rest of the kids not to follow the world but to follow the Lord.” The children’s ministry was pioneered by Nancy Charles, who also writes Christian children’s books and works with children in an aftercare program. Ben and Nancy have four children of their own: Lauren, 18; Alexis, 15; Noah, 12; and Cara, 9.

### Small Church, Big Reach

While CC Charleston is a small church, many have been ministered to there and many have gone to the mission field. “Looking back, we see the various lives changed; some have moved away or just come for a time,” Paul said.

While Paul said he does not especially focus on missions—just verse-by-verse teaching through the Word and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit—he has watched God prompt “person after person” toward the mission field.

Jamie Hogan attended for two years before heading to CC Bible College in Vajta, Hungary, then to Romania as a missionary. There he met and married his wife, Andreea, while working with gypsies and street kids. CC Charleston supports them financially and prayerfully. “When I walked through the doors at CC Charleston, I was blown away by the grace and love that was poured out upon me,” related Jamie. “I came with a lot of baggage from the world, and that didn’t affect how they treated me. The Lord knew just what I needed and provided it through CC Charleston.”

Joel and Stephanie Conner met at CC Charleston and now serve full-time at Rancho Maranatha in Mexico, a Calvary Chapel home for disadvantaged kids. “Charleston has prayed faithfully for us every Thursday night,” says Stephanie. “They also help us financially. A children’s Sunday school class at CC Charleston sold Mexican food and raised money for our school. We love to go back and reconnect with our brothers and sisters there.” Others have gone to China, the Middle East, France, Nicaragua, and Asia, as well as on short-term missions.



*Pastor Sean Nelson with his wife, Sandi, and son Christian.*

### Looking Ahead

“It’s exciting to step into pastoring an already working fellowship,” Sean said, “but I’ve never been a senior pastor before. I have to learn the ropes. More than anything, there’s just pure excitement about what God has in store.” The Nelsons have two children: Christian, 3, and Grace, 2. 🐾

**Calvary Chapel Charleston**  
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Pastor Sean Nelson