

# Rocky Mountain Calvary

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A rock formation in Colorado Springs' Garden of the Gods Park. Local Christians like to refer to the park as "God's Garden."

Photo by Geraldine Wilkins



Rocky Mountain Calvary

In the foyer at Rocky Mountain Calvary, others at the church have recently begun

Pastor Eric Cartier, center, chats with Dan and Beth Johnson before the service. Because of their heart for the fatherless, Eric and others at the church have recently begun an adoption ministry. They hope to provide homes for some of the 700 children in Colorado waiting for families.

**Rocky Mountain Calvary in their indoor skate park, Refuge, Hundreds have come to Christ Gospel of salvation through**

**Colorado Springs, CO, has been reaching out to youth through and to people performing court-ordered community service. by first being shown the love of God and then hearing the Christ.**

## **Pursued by Christ**

Working on a card-printing press, Randy Knowles stared at the Christmas card he had been working on all day. It had a Scripture verse about Jesus. He knew God was trying to get his attention. It had started after his arrest for methamphetamine use.

There was the day a piece of paper blew into his truck. Realizing it was the first page of the Gospel of John, he had laughed but read it. Having been raised in a Christian home, he knew he needed to give his life to Jesus. Then he ran into some old friends who said Jesus had changed their lives. He kept remembering Scriptures he had heard as a child, like Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you

a future and a hope." *Could God really have a plan for my life?* he had wondered.

As soon as his shift ended, Randy drove straight to the church he had recently visited with his mother and brother: Rocky Mountain Calvary. Rushing inside, he told the receptionist, "I have to talk to a pastor right away." A man came and asked what was going on.

"I can't go another minute without Jesus," Randy blurted. When the man began sharing the Gospel, Randy interrupted, "Yes, I know about Jesus. I grew up in a Christian home. My mother and brother have been witnessing to me for years." He related how he had felt God knocking on the door of his heart for months. "I'm ready," he said. "I

want to give my life to Jesus." The two men bowed their heads; Randy asked Jesus to forgive him for his sins and dedicated his life to Christ.

Later, Randy asked to fulfill his court-ordered community service hours at the church. He was supervised by Donnie Stockman, facilities manager. For the next year, Randy recalled, "Donnie would share Scriptures with me and encourage me in the Lord; then he would give me something to do and say, 'Now go think about that.' I would finish the task, and he would share more." After his hours were completed, Randy continued to serve at the church two days a week. In 2003, Donnie offered him an assistant position. Randy felt he was unworthy but accepted the offer.

Soon after, the local community service center asked the church if they could send more men. "It just started growing. We have 20 guys a day now," Randy said. Donnie and Randy are discipling them. "Over the past six years, hundreds of people have gotten saved. ... We just love on them, build a rapport with them." He related that some people had tough exteriors; others were already broken when they came. "We just let the Lord lead," said Randy, who often shares his testimony. "I know that becoming a drug addict was a bad decision I made," he said, "but I believe God used it to bring me to Himself."

## **A Place of Refuge**

In a former warehouse behind the church, young people can use an indoor skate park, get help with homework, or hang out in a safe place where they will hear about Jesus. The vision for the Refuge ministry came from Isaiah 4:6, which says, "And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain."

Jacob Macias, who oversees the ministry, said, “We wanted to create a place where they can feel safe and learn about God. ... Most rollerblade, skateboard, or BMX, but the aim is to reach kids who don’t go to our church with the love of Jesus.”

More than 350 area kids and teens have signed up to go to the center. “On average, we had about 30 kids a night during the summer—mostly from 5th grade to 10th grade,” Jacob said. “In winter, we’ll get a big boom because we’re indoors.”

The church has invested heavily in the center, which is open five nights a week and offers a youth Bible study on Wednesday nights. Teens from the church went door-to-door to invite local kids. Volunteers from the church offer their time or donate food.

“We have built wonderful relationships with the kids,” Jacob said. “For some who don’t have a dad at home, we’ve become a father figure.” Women believers reach out to the young women.

“At first some of them might rebel, but I think they want to know that someone cares about them,” Jacob said. One night, two young men were caught smoking marijuana. When confronted, they became unruly and were asked to leave. He related, “But then they started coming to Bible study. The youngest one was asking us questions about God—how does God comfort us? It led to lots of other questions.”



Several hundred believers gather to worship each Sunday at Rocky Mountain Calvary. Here, Eric teaches the congregation in their new sanctuary.

### Weeping and Rejoicing Together

Pastor Eric Cartier and his wife Amber first served with the youth before Eric became senior pastor in 2005. “In the past four years, many in our congregation have gone through trials. We’ve walked together through pain, sorrow, and joy,” Eric said. Several have lost loved ones in recent years, including the Cartiers.

“In 2008, my wife had two miscarriages,” Eric said. “One of the things that really touched us was the love and prayer and encouragement from the body. ... The pastor is a member of the body too. There are times when you give to the body, and there are times when you receive.” He added, “We received great comfort from others who had been through the loss of a child.”

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

“We’ve learned to share the comfort that we’ve received and to weep with those who weep,” Eric said. He cited Romans 12:15, which says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” Eric explained, “Families in mourning don’t need to be fixed; they don’t need trite answers or a Bible study.” In time, as God heals inner wounds, people may be open to receiving encouragement.



Sunday school teacher Chris Smith, who is also a schoolteacher, with a student assistant.



At an outdoor baptism in a local park, Christopher Vizzini is baptized by his father, Doug Vizzini, and Eric.



Four-year-old Lydia Saxon, center, and fellow preschool and kindergarten kids gather for worship before Sunday school classes.

### Homes for the Fatherless

Believers at Rocky Mountain Calvary have taken a recent interest in adoptions.

*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

James 1:27

“We learned that there are about 700 children in Colorado in need of homes, so we started an adoption ministry,” Eric related. “We meet once a month for those who want to learn more about it or help support those families who are called to adoption by praying for them or encouraging them.”

There are a lot of misconceptions about adoption, Eric explained. “For example, you don’t need \$10,000 to adopt a child. In most states, it doesn’t cost anything except the home evaluation study. ... There are Christian organizations that help guide parents through the adoption process.” The church has invited some of the groups to educate believers.

“You really have to hear God’s voice; it’s not for everybody. ... We share about the challenges and the hardships. These children have been through a lot, and sometimes they have baggage,” he explained. “The last thing we want is for the child to have to go back into foster care.” One couple has already adopted, another is in the process of adopting teens, and several others are praying about adopting.

### Reaching Out

“The culture in Colorado Springs is very polarized when it comes to religion,” Eric said. “There are a lot of people here who love the Lord, a lot of Christian organizations based out of Colorado Springs. ... But there are also many who are radically opposed to Christ, people who have formed counter-movements against those who believe in Him.”

Consequently, sharing the Gospel is best done one-on-one, explained Eric. “The biggest impact has come through people in our church loving their neighbors, getting involved in their lives, and bringing them to church.”

The church also reaches out to the community with a food pantry, a helps ministry for single moms, and a house remodeling ministry. Eric added, “We want people to be loved and introduced to Jesus.”

### Rocky Mountain Calvary

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Colorado Springs sits at the foot of Pikes Peak in the Rocky Mountains.