

# Christ Missionary Mall

A non-profit community initiative of Christ Missionary Baptist Church



*Proposal to prospective contributors*

# “Bloom Where You are Planted”

Water and sunlight: to a flower, these are opportunities. Likewise, human lives can bloom in seemingly meager ground. But unlike flowers, we must nurture the ability to recognize our opportunities in order to benefit from what they can offer.

The choices we make determine whether our lives blossom or wither. Those who see—and seize—their opportunities can bloom where they

are planted, however small their patch of earth may seem. Those who help others grow see their own lives enriched as well.

In 1998, Dr. Melvin B. Girton, Sr., Pastor of Christ Missionary Baptist Church, looked at a boarded-up strip mall and saw an opportunity to enhance the life of a neighborhood. Where others might have seen one more sign of decline in an area in which crime flourished and good

prospects had faded, Pastor Girton saw a chance to help his community blossom.

The property, located two blocks from his church, dominated the 2900 block of Dr. Martin

## *Neighborhoods blossom when they are tended*

Luther King, Jr. Street. The street was defined by heavy traffic and commercialization, bordering a neighborhood whose residents lacked access to many of the services essential to daily living. The nearest laundromat stood three miles away, a challenging distance for those without reliable transportation. Deterred by high crime rates, new stores and businesses chose to open elsewhere. The area’s economic outlook had been blighted for more than a decade.

### **PLANTING THE SEED**

Knowing that cycles of decline do not break without intervention, seeing the need to support his church’s neighborhood, Pastor Girton appealed to his congregation to share his vision of the property as a community asset instead of an eyesore. His congregation agreed.



*Christ Missionary Mall is a non-profit community initiative of Christ Missionary Baptist Church. Photo courtesy Mike Fender.*

After securing over \$300,000 in financing, Christ Missionary Baptist Church purchased the property and began its transformation. Pastor Girton's goals for the project were straightforwardly practical as well as community minded: To provide services that the neighborhood lacked, establish a point of economic stability to encourage area business development, and offer work experience to those who needed it.

As **CHRIST MISSIONARY MALL**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit enterprise, Pastor Girton's project also serves as a business incubator, providing a location in which entrepreneurs can establish new enterprises and demonstrating the area's viability for business development. Profits generated by the church-run businesses in the Mall provide scholarships for college-bound young people, and are used to maintain the Mall and expand its services. Jobs within the Mall also provide a means for neighborhood residents to satisfy court-ordered community service obligations.

The Mall includes *Flowing Waters Wash and Dry*, equipped with a full complement of commercial-grade laundry equipment, and *Your Ice Cream Parlor*, featuring sweet treats and select fast-food items. Additional space is reserved for a *senior citizen center* and a *thrift shop*. A computer laboratory, made possible by a private donation, will open soon. A tenant, Craig Williams, owns and operates Royal Towing and Tire. A restaurant also is located on the Mall premises.

One man's ability to see opportunity and fulfill its promise has created a community initiative fostered by his congregation. Now, Pastor Girton and Christ Missionary Baptist Church seek to enhance and expand their community initiative. Several aspects of the project await additional funding to begin full-time operations. The church has made

an extensive investment in rehabilitating the property and equipping its businesses. Retiring existing debt will enable the project's revenues to be devoted to providing scholarships, maintaining the property, marketing the Mall's services, and assuring its future. Supporting the Mall's business units as they continue to grow toward profitability provides a needed economic boost to a neighborhood struggling to overcome hard times. To these ends, Christ Missionary Mall seeks to fulfill a fundraising campaign objective of \$500,000.

## *The best opportunities create opportunities*



*Christ Missionary Baptist Church provides services and opportunities for its neighborhood community. Photo by Dwayne J. Dixon.*

# *Tending the Garden: Pastor Melvin B. Girton, Sr.*

Dr. Melvin B. Girton, Sr. is a community-minded man whose soft-spoken confidence underscores a lifetime of humanitarian endeavors.

Pastor of Christ Missionary Baptist Church since 1964, he launched an Outreach Counseling Program in 1965, providing youth services in the church basement. In 1966, the church opened the House of the

Second Chance, a halfway house for parolees from the Indiana Women's Prison.

*“Where there is a will,  
there is a way.”*

Pastor Girton's other community initiatives include the Discovery Printing School, a program teaching offset printing skills; several projects providing affordable housing in rehabilitated structures purchased through the federal government; and the “Let's Get It

Together” Fellowship, an alcohol abuse public-awareness and assistance program. Under his leadership, his church has taken an active role in meeting many community needs.

Pastor Girton has served on a wide range of boards and commissions concerned with civic, educational, and religious progress.

- Mayor's Human Rights Commission, City of Indianapolis
- Executive Board, NAACP
- President and Lecturer, Baptist Ministers' Alliance
- President, Interdenominational Alliance
- Indianapolis Chairman, Indiana Christian Leadership Conference
- Secretary, Indiana Interreligious Commission on Human Equality
- Indiana Council of Churches
- Indianapolis Public Schools Referendum Task Force
- Indianapolis Community Desegregation Advisory Council
- Religious Convention Management Association, Indiana Convention Bureau
- Chairman, Indianapolis Baptist Ministers' Fellowship
- Chairman, Citizens for Effective Education
- Vice Chairman, Indiana Billy Graham Crusade



*Pastor Melvin B. Girton, Sr. is an Indianapolis native with a lifelong dedication to church and community.* Photo courtesy Mike Fender.

# The Christ Missionary Mall Project

Christ Missionary Mall serves a neighborhood challenged to overcome economic decline and high crime rates. A majority of its residents' incomes fall at or below the poverty line. Its population includes a disproportionate—and growing—senior citizen demographic underserved by available resources. But equating the area with its statistics is a dangerous underestimation of human potential.

The Mall serves its community in direct and indirect ways.

- Its business units provide services vital to neighborhood residents.
- Job opportunities within the Mall offer residents a chance to build skills for a lifetime of productivity—and, for some, a structured means of meeting court-ordered community service obligations.
- Part-time opportunities as working volunteers help seniors retain their ability to lead active, purposeful lives.
- Revenues generated by the Mall's business units fund scholarships awarded to college-bound area teens.
- A soon-to-be-opened computer laboratory will enable residents to gain hands-on experience vital to employment prospects.
- The Mall fosters area entrepreneurs by providing them with a safe, stable environment in which to launch new businesses.
- Above all, the Mall leads the way for area economic growth by demonstrating the viability of business effort in the community.

## SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY

Within a neighborhood in which many residents lack reliable transportation and struggle to support themselves on low-income wages,

public assistance, or senior-citizen support, meeting basic daily needs is a challenge. Before Flowing Waters, the nearest laundromat was located at 38th Street and College Avenue. The Mall's food-service businesses provide a safe, clean place to dine in a customer-centered atmosphere. These services, and their quality, are all but unduplicated in the area.

*A purposeful life is  
a productive life*



*Christ Missionary Mall provides vital direct and indirect services to a challenged neighborhood and its residents. Photo courtesy Mike Fender.*

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Communities suffer when their residents lack access to economic opportunity. Reclaiming a neighborhood demands an initiative that can address individual as well as community needs. Individual economic progress requires employability, itself a combination of experience, a seasoned mastery of the interpersonal skills necessary for workplace harmony, a sense of purpose fostered by a job well done—and a self-esteeming vision of personal potential.

## *Serving a neighborhood*



*Pastor Girton and church member Lindia Williams on a site visit to the restaurant.* Photo courtesy Mike Fender.

*“You can’t get a job without experience; you can’t get experience without a job.”* Christ Missionary Mall breaks this age-old circular obstacle to the working world, providing the area’s young people with opportunities to gain productive experience in a safe, clean working environment. Your

Ice Cream Parlor’s staff, composed entirely of youth workers, undertakes every aspect of this business unit’s operations, from inventory control to customer satisfaction. Adult guidance assures that operations remain on track, but the young staff holds real responsibility for the store’s success. “It helps you become a leader,” says Jonaya Williams of her tenure

as store manager. “I’ve learned that sometimes you’ll fall or fail, but the challenge is to always step up.”

## HANDS-ON LEARNING OF VITAL SKILLS

Computer literacy is integral to virtually every aspect of modern worklife. Through the generosity of a private donation, the Mall soon will include a computer laboratory equipped with four workstations. This facility will enable local residents to gain vital skills, prepare résumés, and gain access to information through the Internet.

## FULFILLMENT OF COMMUNITY OBLIGATIONS

In an ongoing agreement with the Marion County Probation Department, Christ Missionary Mall serves as an employment resource through which to meet court-ordered community service obligations. Enabling residents to fulfill these obligations within their own neighborhood increases the likelihood of successful progress.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Revenues generated by Christ Missionary Mall’s business units fund scholarships offered to help area teens defray college costs. At present, the Mall has awarded lump-sum grants of up to \$2,000, with total

individual awards of up to \$3,000. Christ Missionary Mall Scholars attend academic institutions including Ball State University, Cincinnati University, and Vincennes University. The majority of Scholars are drawn from the ranks of the Mall's business unit employees.

### GROWING NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS

Christ Missionary Mall is a vital part of its neighborhood's economy, but it alone cannot reverse economic decline. Community entrepreneurship is essential to the neighborhood's ability to grow. In response to that need, Christ Missionary Mall serves as a business incubator, offering businesspeople a safe, stable commercial environment in which to launch and nurture new businesses.

Royal Towing and Tire, owned and operated by Craig Williams, leases its premises within the Mall. Tire sales, towing services, and a hand car wash are the focus of the business, which benefits from its location on a busy thoroughfare and its easy highway access. Mr. Williams, who grew up only a few blocks from the Mall, chose to found his business here despite prospects in other areas of Indianapolis. "I want everyone around here to see we can do something positive in our own neighborhood," Mr. Williams states, adding that "I've seen the neighborhood go down and now it's all coming back up."

### AN OASIS OF SAFETY AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." Likewise, a neighborhood's path to economic vitality begins with an investment in its future. In creating Christ Missionary Mall, Pastor Girton and his church have made a tangible statement of their faith in a community and its residents. The result is a clean, safe, friendly source of services, opportunity, and hope.

## Investing in the future

By making this investment, Christ Missionary Baptist Church hopes to anchor the beginning of a neighborhood renewal. The viability of these efforts depends on the continuation of this community initiative. Fulfilling all aspects of this plan requires on support for the phases currently in operation.



*Entrepreneur Craig Williams chose Christ Missionary Mall as the site of his automotive business. Photo courtesy Mike Fender.*

# *Flowing Waters Wash and Dry*

This self-service laundry facility was the first business unit to open within Christ Missionary Mall. With 31 washers (three of them high-capacity units) and 18 dryers, Flowing Waters provides a vital service to the community at affordable rates. Spacious and spotless, the

laundromat provides convenient access to facilities that previously were unavailable within the neighborhood.

## *Clean clothes in spotless surroundings*

Flowing Waters is staffed by senior citizens who work as part-time volunteers. For seniors, staying active and productive is a key to maintaining independent quality of life. By enabling its employees to add a purposeful destination to their daily lives, Flowing Waters

serves its employees as much as it does its customers.

Closed on Sundays, Flowing Waters is open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays.



*Congregation members Josephine McCord and Odell Baker volunteer in Flowing Waters Wash and Dry. Photo courtesy Mike Fender.*



# *Your Ice Cream Parlor*

Christ Missionary Mall was established to serve its neighborhood as an example of what its residents had a right to expect from community businesses. In an area that has struggled with high crime rates, Your Ice Cream Parlor gained its name as a reminder of its status as part of its community. “Respect this business,” the name clearly says, “and you respect yourself.” The second business unit to open in Christ Missionary Mall, Your Ice Cream Parlor has operated without incident since 1999.

Staffed entirely by young people, including those fulfilling community service obligations, this Mall business unit serves hand-dipped ice cream in a spacious setting large enough to accommodate group socials, parties, and family outings. The employee policy manual emphasizes courtesy, prompt service, thorough inventory control, and spotless maintenance of the premises. Your Ice Cream Parlor operates from noon until 6 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.

*A life lesson  
in every scoop*



*Donna Wilson serves a customer in Your Ice Cream Parlor.*

Photo courtesy Mike Fender.

# An Investment in Community

Through a bank loan, donations from individuals, and grass-roots fundraising, Christ Missionary Baptist Church purchased, rehabilitated, equipped, and furnished a multi-unit community business initiative. This tangible expression of faith in its neighborhood has placed an ongoing financial strain on the church's resources.

## Supporting a vision



Donna Wilson evaluates stock in the thrift shop. Ice cream parlor personnel also staff this facility. Photo courtesy Mike Fender.

An analysis of some of the major costs incurred in establishing this project quickly reveals the magnitude of the church's investment.

■ ACQUISITION OF THE PROPERTY	\$150,000
■ ROOF REPLACEMENT	38,000
■ FURNACES AND AIR CONDITIONING UNITS (4)	22,000
■ PARKING LOT RESURFACING	19,000
■ FENCING	2,000
■ FLOOR, CERAMIC TILE	12,000
■ FLOOR, LINOLEUM TILE (FLOWING WATERS)	4,000
■ EQUIPMENT (FLOWING WATERS)	72,000
■ EQUIPMENT (YOUR ICE CREAM PARLOR)	54,000
■ EQUIPMENT (RESTAURANT)	50,000
■ OUTSIDE SEATING (UMBRELLA TABLES)	2,400
■ INTERIOR REMODELING (COMMUNITY CENTER)	3,000*
■ SIGNAGE	650
*Facility awaiting implementation	\$428,400

These figures exclude debt service, furnishings, inventory, supplies, utensils, and other consumables. Additionally, the Mall's business units incur substantial costs for utilities, equipment upkeep and repair, and maintenance of the premises.

Christ Missionary Mall's potential for continued positive impact on its community is substantial and obvious. Assuring its future—and its future plans—depends in large measure on the Mall's ability to retire its current debt to devote its revenues to programming and operations.

# Looking to the Future

Christ Missionary Mall's community initiative seeks to expand and support its services in four key areas.

## ■ *Expanding the Christ Missionary Mall Scholars program*

This program's impact currently is limited to the use of profits from Mall-run business units to fund scholarship awards. At the same time, these same monies must be devoted to debt service, costs of operation, and upkeep and support of the Mall itself. Project leadership seeks to endow a fund to provide a regular schedule of scholarship awards to college-bound neighborhood teens.

## ■ *Providing employee compensation in Mall business units*

To enhance the job opportunities offered at the Mall and their economic impact on residents' standard of living, the project's leadership seeks to offer stipends to those who work in its business units.

## ■ *Opening the Senior Community Center*

Senior citizens form a substantial—and growing—percentage of the population within the Mall's community. Their numbers exceed the ability of available services to meet their needs for daytime activities and, in some cases, supervised daycare. The Mall's Senior Community facility has been remodeled and furnished, but requires the funding necessary for staff and programming costs.

## Achieving sustainability

## ■ *Assuring the future of the Mall and its programs*

The Mall's impact on its community's quality of life increases as it continues to operate. However, its costs of operation are substantial. Assuring the Mall's future and its positive influence on community economics is essential to its ability to anchor an economic resurgence in the area.



*Remodeled and furnished, the Mall's Senior Community Center awaits funding for staff and programming costs. Photo courtesy Melvin B. Girton, Sr.*

# How You Can Help

Christ Missionary Mall is a tangible statement of faith in a neighborhood and its residents. It enhances quality of life and contributes to economic recovery. It provides young people with experience on which they can build a career, helps them fund a college degree, and enables them to fulfill the promise of their abilities. It offers a second chance to those who need to discharge an obligation to society. It adds productivity and purpose to the lives of senior citizens.

This vital community initiative is a testament to one man's vision, his congregation's humanitarian faith, and the very best traditions of public service. Its programs and businesses reach into the lives of countless people for whom they constitute invaluable resources. The stability and economic prospects of an entire community benefit from it.

## *Become part of a community's rebirth*

Christ Missionary Mall's \$500,000 campaign will enable it to retire its existing debt, implement the full breadth of its programming plans, and continue its efforts to help an entire neighborhood bloom. Attaining this modest objective will help assure the project's sustainability and impact.

Your support for Christ Missionary Mall enables these essential programs to continue and expand. Your gift will touch many lives and help a community renew itself. In recognition, your name will appear on the Christ Missionary Mall Sponsor Honor Roll, a tangible acknowledgment of those who help sustain this valued work. Of course, your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent provided by law.

*Those who help others grow see their own lives enriched as well. Please join us in helping a neighborhood bloom where it is planted.*



*Christ Missionary Mall helps a neighborhood community renew itself.*

Photo courtesy Mike Fender.

# *Christ Missionary Mall Board of Directors*

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*Your support for Christ Missionary Mall touches many lives.*

Photo courtesy Mike Fender.