



# Harvest Bible buys 53rd Street big box

By Deirdre Cox Baker

The bustling 53rd and Utica Ridge Road area of Davenport — home to a multiplex movie theater, chain restaurants, banks and trendy shops — will add a big-box church to its midst.

Harvest Bible Chapel will purchase the former Ultimate Electronics building on East 53rd Street, just east of Interstate 74. The church hopes to move the congregation in the building at the end of the year. The announcement was made recently to a cheering crowd in the chapel's temporary Sunday location, the Bettendorf High School auditorium.

"We are amazed and excited," the Rev. Rob Willey said. "We have a bunch of people coming through our doors and a lot of lives that are being affected. The only explanation is that God is involved. This move happened so fast, many lives have been changed for the better."

While church officials said cost to buy and renovate the structure is unknown, the assessed value of the 52,000 square foot property is \$4.6 million, including \$3.3 million for the buildings and \$1.28 million for the land. The deed is held by Elias Properties of Davenport.

Ultimate Electronics was based in Thornton, Colo., and opened its Davenport operation in August 1999, leasing 35,000 feet of the store that was formerly home to Jumbo Sports. It closed in March 2005 in a bankruptcy reorganization.

The church sales deal is not yet complete, but listing agent Rick Weinstein of Ruhl & Ruhl Commercial Co., Davenport, believes Harvest Bible will be a good fit. "They are good neighbors wherever they are," he said.

The local chapel of 700 members is an outgrowth of the 6,000-strong Harvest Bible Fellowship in Rolling Meadows, Ill. The conservative evangelical ministry is non-denominational and headed by the Rev. James MacDonald, also known for his radio program, "Walk in the Word Tour." MacDonald challenged followers to plant 10 churches in 10 years, with the first in Glen Ellyn, Ill., in 2000.

Willey came to Iowa in 2004, with the first services on Nov. 14 that year. The chapel has gotten a warm welcome from residents.

"We have just found a great openness in the community," he said, noting, for example, that he met Thursday with a group of potential builders for the new location. "I called my wife afterwards and told her, even the builders are nice around here. That's another great aspect of the Quad-Cities."

Renovation will remove most walls in the structure to include a large place for worship, he said. There will be a children's ministry area and larger youth rooms for junior and senior high school students. Future plans are to expand into the space now occupied by La'James International College.

The location near Interstate 74 and along 53rd Street is perfect, said John Cochran of Bettendorf, chairman of the elder board, the chapel's local governing body. It will provide easy access to current members and also attract the curious.

"We are just thrilled that God's provided this for us and that we can move into a more permanent location to expand our ministry possibilities. We'll be able to minister to the Quad Cities and beyond in a most effective way," Cochran said.

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