

Pastor loves reaching out to people



By DEREK MAUL | The Brandon News

Published: February 10, 2011

Updated: 02/10/2011 07:56 am

Meet Chris Armstrong

Position: Pastor, Boyette Springs Church of God

Address: 12114 Boyette Road, Riverview

Telephone: (813) 671-0086

Services: 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sundays

RIVERVIEW - In 1993, 12 people joined Chris Armstrong to launch a Church of God congregation in Riverview. Today close to 200 people meet for worship at the 12114 Boyette Road location every Sunday morning.

"I'm fortunate enough that God has entrusted me with this ministry," Armstrong said, "and surrounded me with so many wonderful people."

Armstrong talked recently about his life and ministry:

Q. Where were you raised?

A. I was born in Lakeland (1948) and raised in Plant City – I'm the oldest of seven children. My dad worked for the railroad. I attended Plant City High through 1966, then finished my education in the Navy.

Q. Where did you serve?

A. On a destroyer, the USS Lowry (DD 770). I got hurt in a gun mount explosion and was discharged in 1969.

Q. Have you always worked in ministry?

A. I worked with a casket company, then a wholesale grocery business. I was with the post office from 1973 to 2002.

Q. How did God call you?

A. I got saved at a tent revival in Plant City when I was 26, but I had no desire to do ministry. But God put it on my heart. In 1981 I went to a revival at Lakeland Highlands Church of God and the pastor confirmed my call.

Q. What's your official title?

A. We have three levels of licensing. I got my exhorter's license in 1981. The next stage is licensed minister. The final stage is ordained bishop. I received that around 1996.

Q. Why come to Riverview?

A. My wife and I were working in senior adult ministry in Mulberry, and having a wonderful experience. I've worked as associate pastor, taught Sunday school, served as church treasurer, youth leader, taught teens. God had me doing anything and everything. Preparing me. I just want to be faithful. But the Lord spoke to my heart about Riverview.

Q. How long have you been married?

A. I married Ree (Thacker) in 1969. She's a jewel, just an awesome lady. She loves this church and she cares about everybody. I've never seen someone excel in the way that she does. We've given ourselves, poured our hearts into this ministry, she's an extraordinary, Godly lady. She is my strength.

Q. What gives you joy in ministry?

A. To see people blessed, to see people come to the Lord and when God touches lives. We're here to help others in any way that we can. I love people. I love my people. It's always been my goal – whoever walks through these doors - to be a place where we reach this lost world for the saving knowledge of Christ.

Q. Is there a Scripture you want to share?

A. Psalms 46:1, "God is a very present help in time of trouble." Then – especially when there was a lot I didn't understand - Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding...." I still stand on that.

Q. What's God teaching you today?

A. To rely on him more than I ever have, to trust him. As ministry grows, so do the challenges. Trusting God in hard financial times.

Q. Do you have a vision?

A. We have an ongoing mission to Costa Rica, and I'm a firm believer in reaching out. But my vision is to do anything we can to become involved in this community. To reach out and help in any way we can.

Q. How would you invite someone to church?

A. I say just come and give us a try. All we try to do is to embrace people. If there's anything we can improve on, then I want to hear about it. Just come and experience who we are.

derekmaul@gmail.com