



News

'You can't write this script': How a small bible college found a 'miracle building' for its new Long Grove campus



Quentin Road Baptist Church Executive Pastor Paul Julian enters as Joe Solimini, development director, holds the door to the former CF Industries building overlooking Salem Lake in Long Grove. The long-abandoned and vandalized building will be revived as the new home of Dayspring Bible College and Seminary. *Brian Hill/bhill@dailyherald.com*

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Mick Zawislak

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Circumstances that connected a small bible college with a majestic new home overlooking Salem Lake in Long Grove might be described as coincidence, luck or destiny.

Leaders of **Dayspring Bible College and Seminary** have a different take.

"The term gets thrown around loosely but this is a miracle," says Pastor Paul Julian, Dayspring dean. "You can't really explain it — it's almost unbelievable."

Dayspring's journey is a tale of three homes, a decades-old contact and a generous gift. And it's led them to the long-abandoned CF Industries corporate headquarters adjacent to the Heron Creek Forest Preserve near Route 22 and Old McHenry Road.



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Empty and vandalized over 18 years, the 120,000-square-foot, brick-faced concrete and steel “miracle” building will be revived, revamped and modernized with an expected move in fall 2027.

The first phase of an \$8 million project calls for two-thirds of yawning, heavily vandalized office space to be converted to dorm rooms, apartments, classrooms, library and other elements of a college campus, and restoration of the original landscaping.

That will allow the college of about 80 students to accommodate twice as many, double the current square footage and be closer to the Quentin Road Baptist Church in Lake Zurich, where the college found a home in its early years.

The planned move is even more uplifting given a major decline in the number of Bible colleges and shifting focus away from full-time ministry, college officials say.

“It’s taken a long time to get established,” Julian said. “We have graduates all over the world.”

The official title transfer of the building and 32 acres is scheduled for mid-May. But the hands-on congregation at Quentin Road Baptist Church has been removing garbage, broken glass, drywall and securing the building, which had become a target for vandals.

“We’ve been cleaning it up for a year. We spent six months just removing graffiti from brick,” Julian said.

The structure itself is in good shape but a lot happened inside since CF Industries relocated in 2008.

“It gets a hold of you,” Joe Solimini, director of development, said of the opportunity and work ahead. “We’re just a small ministry training college.”

Humble beginnings

From 1982 to 2012, Dayspring shared facilities with Quentin Road Baptist Church, its first location. As it grew, leaders sought a separate campus that serendipitously landed on their lap.

Dayspring’s late founder and pastor, James Scudder, often passed the property on Fairfield Road north of Route 176 thinking it would be a good location for a new campus. By chance, he heard news of Alternative Behavioral Treatment Center, which occupied the property, going bankrupt.

“It was meant to be,” Julian said of the what would become Dayspring’s second home.

A deal was struck, and after three months of renovation of the existing dormitories and other buildings, Dayspring opened for the fall 2012 semester. With continued growth, the college again began looking for a new home in 2024.

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The former CF Industries building overlooking Salem Lake in Long Grove will become the new home of Dayspring Bible College and Seminary. The long abandoned building and 32 acres was gifted to Dayspring, allowing an \$8 million restoration to proceed. *Brian Hill/bhill@dailyherald.com*

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Dayspring considered the CF property but faced with extensive work and a \$5 million asking price moved along.

“We walked away,” Julian said.



Vandals have damaged and tagged much of the former CF Industries building in Long Grove. The expansive former office building will be revived into classrooms, dorm rooms and other facilities for Dayspring Bible College and Seminary's new campus. *Brian Hill/bhill@dailyherald.com*

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That's where its past comes into play. Years before, arts and crafts giant Hobby Lobby, known for faith-based values and philanthropy, out of the blue offered to gift the congregation a building in Elgin.

Too big and not close enough to its facilities in Lake Zurich, the offer was declined.

Dayspring officials remembered Hobby Lobby's offer. With their sights set on the Long Grove property 20 years later, Dayspring reached out to the retail company, hoping Hobby Lobby would buy the property and turn it over to them.

Solimini said Hobby Lobby was still familiar with the ministry by watching its YouTube channel and had seen Scudder on a program called "In Grace" on the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Hobby Lobby agreed to their request, buying the building and 32-acre property in Long Grove with the goal of turning it over to Dayspring.

"Like I said, it's a miracle," Solimini said.

Church leaders met with residents in neighboring subdivisions to discuss the vision and hosted an open house and barbecue before making the case to the village's advisory plan commission and zoning board of appeals. Approval was unanimous and the village board followed suit.



The Dayspring Bible College and Seminary campus on Fairfield Road north of Route 176 near Wauconda is being acquired by the Lake County Forest Preserve District for \$4 million. *Paul Valade/pvalade@dailyherald.com*

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New life for old home

Besides marking a milestone for Dayspring, the college's mission to equip Christian leaders for ministry and service worldwide, nearby residents and the Lake County Forest Preserve District also will benefit from the sale of the college's current campus.

With an eye toward moving, Dayspring officials met with the forest preserve. On March 11, the forest board approved buying Dayspring's current campus for \$4 million with a provision it be allowed to lease back the buildings for up to two years.



Joe Solimini, left, and Pastor Paul Julian talk about planned work to restore the long vacant former CF Industries building in Long Grove into a new campus for Dayspring Bible College and Seminary. *Brian Hill/bhill@dailyherald.com*

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Dayspring's existing campus is surrounded by Lakewood Forest Preserve. Some of the buildings may be reused for other purposes and the habitat will be enhanced by controlling what is regarded as an entry for invasive species, forest officials say.

Long Grove also is benefiting from the move. For the college's soon-to-be neighbors, having an academic institution with a 24/7 presence will eliminate trespassing and vandalism concerns and greatly reduce calls for service to the Lake County sheriff's office, said Long Grove Village Manager Chris Sparkman.



The Dayspring Bible College and Seminary campus on Fairfield Road north of Route 176 near Wauconda is being sold to the Lake County Forest Preserve District for \$4 million. *Paul Valade/pvalade@dailyherald.com*

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Dayspring has about \$1.8 million left on its fundraising goal. While much work awaits to achieve the vision, Julian and others marvel at Hobby Lobby's remarkable gift and chain of events that led here.

"You can't write this script," he said. "It's pretty amazing."



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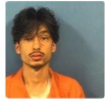
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