

Church's End Ushers in New Opportunity for EWU Students

On June 4, 2006, members of the Cheney Christian Church gathered in the pews to sing and pray like they had countless times before. But this worship service was unlike any other. This service marked the end of an era.

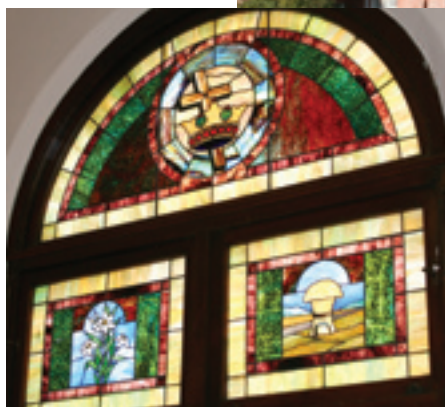


For nearly 100 years, churchgoers have congregated in the familiar brick building on the edge of the Eastern Washington University campus, not far from Showalter Hall. But with fewer than 20 regular members remaining, church members were forced to make a tough decision. The church would have to close its doors. However, they found a way to make sure the church's mission lives on.

"The sadness we feel about closing the church is replaced with the joy we feel in handing it off to students," said church elder Jane Henson, about the congregation's decision to give the historic building to Eastern Washington University. "Cheney Christian Church's background has always been inextricably connected with activities and programs on the campus of EWU. Our congregation has always supported Eastern in various ways over the years so it seemed only appropriate that we could continue to do so even after our closing."

Henson was on hand with other former church members in October as the University held an open house in its newly acquired property, a property that adds to the University's heritage, having been placed on the Cheney Register of Historic Places in 2001. It was a blending of the old with the new. As visitors mingled and listened to a presentation on the church's long history in Cheney, church members shared their thoughts on their old church's new role.

"We're very fortunate that we were able to come to an arrangement with the University," said former pastor Jeannette Solimine. "The church isn't going away, it's being reborn with a new mission."



Exactly what that mission will be isn't clear yet, but the church board gave the church and the land to EWU to serve students at Eastern in programs where there is the greatest need, with preference of use given to religious studies, philosophy and international students. Whatever ends

up being housed there, church members are happy to know that their faithful old building won't be torn down, but rather built up as a place to educate Eastern students.

For information about giving a real estate gift to the EWU Foundation, contact:

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