To extend healing and hope in the Oxford Circle community, believing that God’s purpose of reconciling all people to Jesus leads us to minister on spiritual, physical, social & economic levels.

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NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

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A Dream of What Can Be

This past year has seen lots of change at Oxford Circle. In January, we opened the Family Resource Center at Carnell Elementary that provides case management and parent support. Construction is now completed on the first floor for the Christian Education wing and community preschool (partnership with KinderAcademy) and will open in September 2016. When completed we will be able to serve a total of 114 children. Additionally, our after school and summer camp program has grown to include 160 children in grades K-8. Finally, through our adult education program, we provide three weekly ABE, GED and ELL classes serving over 40 adults both at our offices and at Carnell.

For those of you not in our vision and planning meetings, it might feel like random growth but I can assure you that it is not. I am so excited to see a comprehensive education plan for our community emerging! We believe that quality education is a right for all people. We believe our preschool will prepare children to enter Carnell Elementary ready to learn. We are excited to see our partnership with Carnell Elementary changing the quality of education for K-5 students in our community and thank God for bringing Principal Pelzer to lead redesign and provide the opportunity for us to welcome families into the Family Resource Center. We believe that extended day out of school programs are crucial to help children who have been left behind academically catch up in basic literacy, math and critical thinking skills. We are excited to welcome adults who are determined to improve their economic possibilities and family literacy by attending GED and English Language classes.

We still have gaps to fill in our community education plan. There is currently no Middle School so children grades 6-8 in our community take two public buses (45 min. to 1 hour away) to a failing school. Other than providing employment and mentoring to a small group of high schoolers, we have had limited success engaging our community high school which is literally in our back yard.

Our vision feels overwhelming at best and impossible at worst but I am confident that God desires to see all children and families in our community succeed and have access to quality education!

We welcome your prayers and visioning with us as we continue to dream of what can be.
Healing Hearts Camp—staff reflections
The Healing Hearts Camp was a wonderful opportunity for the bright, energetic children of the Oxford Circle community to learn more about their emotions and God’s love for them. My group of 6-8 year olds enjoyed exploring concepts such as grief and loss, loneliness, and emotional regulation, and did so with openness and curiosity. We wrote laments to God during our time together, and I will treasure their vulnerability and honesty for years to come; these children are brave and beautiful. It was powerful to see how the potential for peace and unity exists in the hearts of these little ones. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue building relationships with these children throughout the school year and look forward to all that God will do in and through their lives. - Emily Ewing

Isaiah 61:3b-4 "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

Summer Camp In two locations: OCCCDA building and Carnell Elementary
Reflection by Lamar, Director of Summer Camp at Carnell
Over this summer I feel we had a chance to add significance to student’s lives who live in our community. It was our intent to introduce students to opportunities they may have not experienced before. The ability to learn and play an instrument, to help a licensed nutritionist and chef prepare healthy snacks and to have the option to attend Bible Time acquiring the teaching from our lessons based on the fruits of the spirit. This experience has been a reminder to me how fortunate I am that God trust me with those he loves most.

"I really didn’t know what to expect the week of Trauma/Healing camp. Margi and her team trained and prepared us with tools to use for the week, but there were times when the group of girls struggled with God and the suffering they had endured. The Trauma/Healing camp allowed me to hear the stories of pain and suffering, and because I am a mother I just wanted to hug them tight and tell them that everything will be fine. This camp made me realize that God’s purpose for my life is to help this generation of children heal from the pain that has been inflicted onto them. The key to this is healing in an appropriate way. I pray for the kids that attended the Trauma/Healing camp, and I can only hope that during their time here, that they experienced Gods love through all of the facilitators." - Shynita Rice

World Food Fair, Flea Market, and Fun Run 2016
Our second annual World Food Fair, Flea Market, and Fun Run was held on June 18th, on a glorious sunny day. This year we added a “Fun Run” 5k race, which was a highlight. As we envisioned this event last year, our goal was to bring the community together and celebrate the great diversity and fabulous food that our Oxford Circle neighborhood has to offer. This coming year, we are excited to have the opportunity (funded by the Mustard Seed Foundation) to further develop this model of discipleship and fellowship by providing monthly opportunities to share a meal and Christ’s love with our neighbors from around the world.

The Fun Run and Flea Market began at 8am, followed by set up for the World Food Fair. This year food came from Cambodia, Camerooon, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Haiti, Palestine, Panama, Puerto Rico, the United States, and South Vietnam. The Home Depot had a children’s craft area where children were able to construct small toolboxes. Photo credit: Cyneé Photography

"Käsespätzle" vs. "German Mac & Cheese" - Petra Opett
When I was asked last year to prepare a typical dish from my home country for the World Food Fair, this was a no-brainer. Being from a region in Germany known as Swabia, “Käsespätzle" was it: homemade pasta smothered in gooey cheese with the optional addition of grilled onions. While it doesn’t look very sophisticated, it is absolutely yummy! At least the people who tried it said so. Only there weren’t many who did. You see, being German I had felt the need to advertise my creation as what it is called in German, “Käsespätzle”, which didn’t mean anything to anyone who doesn’t speak the language. Someone even thought this was an African specialty! This year, however, I followed my husband’s advice and advertised it as “German Mac & Cheese” . The rebranding made all the difference and lots of people decided to give it a try! It made one thing very clear to me: If you are trying to reach people, you have to use words they can relate to.