

Proposal for Apartment Chaplaincy Pilot Project
for Boulder Park Apartments
University Place, WA
in partnership with Covenant Bible Seminary
December 2022

Purpose: to serve the residents, management, and owners of Boulder Park Apartments by establishing a faith-based, community-building, relational support ministry through a part-time, paid apartment chaplain position.

Over the last two and a half years, the measures that were taken in response to Covid-19 have resulted in isolation, fear, loneliness, and a host of emotional and mental problems that will impact our society on a scale that will never be fully understood. These are unprecedented times. That being said, the individual problems we are facing, such as an increase in rates of emotional and mental instability, a rise in substance abuse, economic challenges, civic tensions, and many other related, societal challenges, have been around for a long time. These issues, at their root, stem from people being *disconnected from community*, so any strategy that seeks to address them must be relational in nature, and result in people who are disconnected from community being **connected to a strategic network of supportive relationships**. A successful strategy must result in a constellation of relationships that gives support to each individual within the community.

Dr. Merritt Lawson left a legacy of passion and vision for reaching the lost and hurting with the grace of the Gospel of Jesus. The very founding of Covenant Bible Seminary is rooted in his call to a ministry of mercy, specifically chaplaincy ministry. In 1985, Dr. Lawson, “received a pastoral Call from the Board of Directors of Covenant Bible Fellowship, Inc., to serve as their corporate President and to establish a *chaplaincy ministry* of Biblical pastoral care to the institutionalized elderly. Dr. Lawson accepted the Call and shortly thereafter the chaplaincy ministry was established. It also became apparent to the Board that there was a need, in the Seattle-Tacoma-Olympia area, for an interdenominational Biblical school of theology, as a seminary.”¹

The missional fervor of Dr. Lawson was the seed of the seminary, and his desire for unleashing workers into the harvest is the heartbeat that animates the ongoing, creative outreach of the school. As stewards of this legacy, we are in a strategic position to build on the foundation of Dr. Lawson, expand the reach of Kingdom blessing, and serve as an outpost of beauty and goodness for the sake of the Gospel.

“The primary purpose of Covenant Bible Seminary is to seek to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say, teach, and do through this educational arm of Covenant Bible Fellowship, Incorporated, which is our parent church corporation.

¹ Page 8, Mission Statement, Covenant Bible Seminary Catalog, 2018-2020, emphasis added.

Today we have a great opportunity to serve the Lord in a sin-sick and hurting world that desperately needs to know Jesus Christ as its God and Savior. “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few ... pray that He will send laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2).”²

Rationale: the ministry of apartment chaplaincy opens a door to a largely untapped opportunity for the expansion of God’s Kingdom through showing the unconditional love of Christ to the residents of Boulder Park. This is done by creating a warm and friendly culture, fostering relationships and community within the apartment community, serving as a point of contact between residents and local churches, services or other ministries, and then discovering the myriad of other benefits that proceed from these. Appendix A includes more about the theological and biblical foundation, and the missional reflection that motivates and shapes this proposed chaplaincy ministry.

According to multiple research sources, 95 to 98% of residents who live in multi-family housing are unchurched,³ making them a mission field in desperate need of exposure to followers of Jesus who can cultivate relationships, contribute to building a flourishing community, and foster an atmosphere that is conducive to the spread of the Gospel.

Research has also demonstrated that faith-based ministry to apartment residents results in higher resident satisfaction, lower turnover, fewer vacancies, and thus increased profit for apartment owners.⁴ This has a positive impact on the financial bottom line, and also allows owners and investors to know that they are using their investment to make a positive impact on the lives of people and the community at large. Appendix B includes more of the financial benefits of an apartment chaplaincy program.

The Need of the Hour: In December of 2020, the US Census Bureau reported that more than 42% of people surveyed reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, up from 11% the year before.⁵ At the same time, many people are turning to alcohol, and one study reports that “alcohol consumption in the U.S. rose 14% compared with before the pandemic. Women, in

² Page 5, President’s Message, Covenant Bible Seminary Catalog, 2018-2020

³ Mission 98 chose its name to reflect “our desire to bring church to the 98% of multi-housing residents who do not currently have a church home.” <https://www.mission98.org/aboutus>, Baptist Press and North Carolina Baptist articles report that 95% of multi-family housing residents are unchurched <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/most-of-north-america-lives-in-multi-housing-95-of-them-lost-without-christ/>, <https://ncbaptist.org/article/the-lost-community-you-may-not-see/>.

⁴ David Snyder, founder and CEO of Continental Realty, where he has purchased over \$2 billion in investments of commercial and multifamily real estate for his clients and sponsored investment funds, explained that a typical complex will experience about 75% turnover each year, so a 400 unit complex will have 300 units change resident each year, each costing about \$3,000 to clean, show and re-rent. When a faith-based resident support ministry is active, this is reduced to approximately 45-48%, so the 300 becomes less than 200, and it saves about \$300,000. Also, please see the example financial illustration in Appendix A.

⁵ *COVID’s mental-health toll: how scientists are tracking a surge in depression*, Nature, February 3, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00175-z>.

particular, increased heavy drinking days by 41%, according to the study.”⁶ Calls to the federal government’s mental health and substance abuse referral line increased 27% from 2019 to 2020, and rose an additional 20% in 2021 (bringing the total number of calls to 1.02 million!).⁷ On the positive side, many people are seeking the help of mental health counselors to address their increased stress and anxiety, but this has led to long waiting lists and difficulty finding a counselor who will take new clients. There simply are not enough mental health professionals to address the needs of the countless number of hurting people at this time.

These increased rates of mental health problems and substance use are symptoms of deeper, underlying issues. At the root of these problems is an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Because of this, ministries that seek to build community, foster relationships, and provide opportunities for people to connect with their neighbors are in a strategic position to make a significant positive impact on the lives of people.

Apartment Chaplain Ministry: In the 1995 article *Filling a Spiritual Vacancy in Apartment Dwellers’ Lives*, Yvonne White writes, “The U.S. armed forces have them. Congress has them. Hospitals, nursing homes, colleges and prisons have them. ... Now housing complexes ... have chaplains, too.”⁸ In her interview with a former Alabama state legislator who owns two apartment complexes, Dave Hale, he explains that he “believes that chaplains may be an answer to the apartment dweller’s isolation and alienation.” Note that Mr. Hale is making this statement about isolation in 1995, long before the historic, isolating events of 2020.

Jean Rhodes is the activities coordinator for Multi-Housing Ministry, which was founded in 1986 and within 10 years had deployed nearly 100 chaplains in 95 apartment complexes. She explains the basic strategy: “We first ... go into apartment complexes with activities for children and adults. Then when the apartment managers see what kind of work we do, they usually let us bring in a chaplain.”⁹

Once a ministry to apartment residents is in place, there is a domino-effect of various positive outcomes that are win-win-win for the residents, managers and apartment owners. Owner Dave Hale explains, “People are no longer suspicious of us,” he said, “and they call the office when they see things going on they think we might need to know about. . . . It has virtually eliminated crime, drugs and gangs around the complex, and we are attracting better people.”¹⁰

⁶ *Americans are using alcohol to cope with pandemic stress*, USA Today, September 22, 2021 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/09/22/covid-19-pandemic-heavy-drinking-survey-alkermes/5798036001/>.

⁷ *This is why it’s so hard to find mental health counseling right now*, by Lenny Bernstein, The Washington Post, March 6, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/03/06/therapist-covid-burnout/>

⁸ *Filling a Spiritual Vacancy in Apartment Dwellers’ Lives*, by Yvonne White, The Washington Post, March 11, 1995. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1995/03/11/filling-a-spiritual-vacancy-in-apartment-dwellers-lives/25c60de3-ce51-4c33-b19b-d3d28694a923/>

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

In Denver, Colorado, the founders of Mission 98 have been serving multi-family communities since 2001, and have adopted the same basic strategy. Here is how they describe it:

Mission 98 takes the best of church to residents in their own communities by hosting programs for children, teens, and adults. Members of our team are present through the ups and downs of life, meeting tangible needs through our food pantry and clothing room while also making hospital visits, performing weddings, conducting funerals, hosting carnivals, offering homework help, and more. We also invest in the lives of children, teens, and adults as we eat together, learn about Jesus together, and spend time together. This is a ministry of relationships. We exist to build and foster real friendships through which physical, relational, and spiritual needs can be met—just as Jesus would do.¹¹

Strategy for Apartment Chaplain for Boulder Park Apartments: We propose creating a part-time chaplaincy position for Boulder Park Apartments as a ministry of Covenant Bible Seminary. Here are some of the basic elements:

- This will start as an 8-hour per week position (subject to periodic review) that will be administered through the seminary.
- The partnership between the seminary and the apartment chaplaincy will provide potential networking opportunities, such as: deploying students into creative ministries that benefit residents, encouraging other missional endeavors among everyone connected to the seminary, developing a chaplaincy internship or apprenticeship that utilizes the apartment chaplaincy as a ministry supervisor, and connecting churches who partner with the seminary to ministry opportunities discovered by the chaplain, just to name a few.
- The apartment chaplain would be supervised by the seminary president (or person designated by the seminary president), who will administer a 90-day review, and then annual reviews thereafter.
- John Golling, CBS Registrar, will serve as the initial Apartment Chaplain. Professor Golling has served as a pastor in the community for over 20 years, and has expressed a missional calling and God-given desire to help launch this ministry and serve in this capacity.
- The seminary board will provide oversight for the seminary president's supervision of the Chaplain.

Expanded excellence and sustainability through academic research and support: The research, development, implementation and initial evaluation that will take place in the first 36 months of this chaplaincy ministry will be completed as a Doctor of Ministry Thesis-Project by the apartment chaplain, Professor John Golling. This will be completed through Covenant Bible Seminary's partner educational institution, Kairos University. This will provide for theological, biblical, sociological and cultural reflection, research guidance, peer

¹¹ Mission98 mission statement taken from <https://www.mission98.org/aboutus> on 9/20/2022.

review, practical oversight, and many other benefits intended to increase the quality and impact of the ministry.

This D.Min. (Doctor of Ministry) project requirement will provide the **benefit of three additional, seasoned advisors** (mentors) to be involved in developing the ministry and supervising the chaplain, and a **framework of review and evaluation** of the ministry from inception to implementation to the first two annual evaluations.

The Kairos University Doctor of Ministry program is specifically designed to assist students to do the work necessary to “discover and articulate the biblical and theological framework for their projects. By observing and interacting with presentations of peers, students are able to benefit from the work of others as they deepen and refine their work. In addition to observing, students prepare a presentation on how their biblical and theological understanding informs their proposed project. After sharing the presentation with their mentor team, they present in front of their peers with the goal of gathering and incorporating feedback along the way.” This process is completed again with the goal of gaining a deeper insight and greater understanding of the sociological and cultural issues that are particular to the ministry endeavor.

Funding for this chaplaincy ministry is to include educational benefits in the amount necessary to cover the cost of this program (currently \$300/month). The 36 month timeline is based on an early projection for the completion of the thesis-project, the actual timeline is subject to change based on evaluation.

By implementing the ministry as a D.Min. Thesis-Project with Kairos University, it also provides a means by which the lessons learned from the experience are available to others in the greater Christian community, as well as providing a continuing education requirements and benefit for the chaplain. Professor Golling had previously completed the *coursework phase* for a Doctor of Ministry degree (Corban University, 2011-2014) and is thus strategically positioned from an academic standpoint to embark immediately on the *project phase* of the degree.

Basic Strategy for Apartment Chaplaincy Ministry: The following is a draft of the basic strategy that may be adopted and demonstrates some of the guiding principles, flow of concept, and intended steps and outcomes. This will undoubtedly be reshaped during the research phase and incubation period.

The intended long-term, Gospel-oriented, spiritual benefits of this ministry are all predicated on the building of relationships that are characterized by trust. As a missional effort, this strategy is based on the theological concept of the incarnation of Christ, and its application in terms of relationships that are both intentionally established and organically developed. Therefore, part of this ministry will include the chaplain meeting residents in-person as they move in, introducing himself and his role, and how to contact him. The chaplain will also be involved in facilitating the planning of events for residents that provide an environment for establishing relationships. The purpose of these events are first and foremost the establishment of relationships.

As the chaplain builds relationships with residents and makes himself available to them, this will provide the forum for any number of creative ministry opportunities. The chaplain would be available to residents seeking support for a crisis, providing emotional first-aid, and then connecting them with resources for ongoing support. He would be available to help in cases of grief and loss, for a crisis response, and continued spiritual support when requested. He would provide referrals to those seeking various types of ongoing help, including spiritual community, financial assistance, educational needs, and counseling or mental health support, among other things.

The chaplain would also **help connect local churches to residents** for other creative support such as financial counseling, benevolent help, tutoring for children, small group Bible studies and other ways of introducing interested residents to the Christians within the community.

The Chaplain will work closely with local pastors and churches to **cultivate a network of relationships and support for residents**, as well as provide the opportunity for mutual encouragement for each other, as they engage in their common goal to serve the residents of the greater community. .

Ideally, the apartment chaplain would be a **long-term position** in order to provide a consistent and faithful presence for residents, and dependable connection to services and ministries in the local community. A long-term Chaplain could bring a sense of continuity and consistency for residents as well as pastors, churches and ministries involved in serving them.

Over time, the result would be that residents, particularly those 95 to 98% that do not have a church, are given the opportunity to experience a **constellation of supportive relationships**. When residents experience this kind of support, it leads to emotional health, physical assistance when needed, overall wellness, and an opportunity to experience the grace of Jesus shown through people who are seeking to love them as neighbors, created in the image of God.

Financial Commitment: The monthly cost of this ministry includes an increase in the employment designation of the Registrar, John Golling, from .8 FT to 1 FT, (employee expenses, approximately \$1,330), a monthly budget for supplies, meals, milage and events related to on-site and in-person contacts (\$770), school expenses including tuition, books and other school related expenses (approximately \$400), a total of approximately \$2,500 per month.

Appendix A

Theological Foundation: Jesus often declared that He had been *sent* by His Father to accomplish His mission in the world (John 3:17, 34; 4:38; 5:23; 6:29, 38, 44, etc.). Jesus told his followers that just as the Father had *sent* Him, so He was *sending* them (John 20:21). After Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit was *sent* into the world (Acts 2).

The term 'mission' comes from the latin word *missio*, which means "send," as shown in the chart below from the Oxford dictionary.¹²

Origin



By definition, to be on a mission is to be sent, and to be sent is to be on a mission.

The dictionary entry explains the word's origin, "mid 16th century (denoting the sending of the Holy Spirit into the world): from Latin *missio*(n-), from *mittere* 'send'." Here we discover that the very definition of our English word *mission* was conceived from God's work of sending the Holy Spirit into the world.

Theologians use the term *missio dei* to denote the aspect of God in which He reveals himself as being the God who sends, as well as the God who is sent. He is a God on a mission. This attribute of God can be seen throughout the Scriptures, in specific places and in the overarching narrative of the Bible as a whole. These Scriptures are the source for deeper theological reflection concerning what it means that God is a God with a mission, a God who lives on mission, and a God who seeks to share that mission with His people.

Leslie Nubegin served as a missionary in India for 36 years. When he returned to England in 1974, he noted that the "Christian West" that sent him to India as a missionary, had now become a mission field in need of being evangelized. Western society had become so thoroughly post-Christian, that for believers to be effective in spreading the Gospel, they need to approach evangelism as a cross-cultural missionary, entering into foreign mission field. He began teaching and writing about the need for Western Christians to adopt a missionary- or missional- approach to sharing the Gospel with their neighbors.¹³ This would mean embedding themselves within the community, living, working and serving as an incarnational example of the love and grace of Christ.

¹²<https://www.google.com/search?q=define+mission&oq=define+mission&aqs=chrome..69j57j0l512l9l623j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesslie_Newbigin

Appendix B

This example from Apartment Life assumes a 300 unit complex.¹⁴ The cost is comprised of rent, in the form of relinquishing an apartment unit for ministry use, a monthly fee paid to Apartment Life, and an activity budget for community-building activities sponsored by the ministry for the residents.

RESULTS

OUTCOMES

INCREASED RETENTION

5% ↑

INCREASED OCCUPANCY

1.5% ↑

COSTS VS. SAVINGS

COST

Rent (1,200/mo)	\$14,400
Monthly Fee (\$620/mo)	\$7,440
Activity Budget (\$300/mo)	\$3,600
TOTAL	\$23,440

SAVINGS

Turnover	\$42,165
(300 units x .05 retention increase per year) x \$2,811 cost of turn	

PAYOUT

NOI PER PROPERTY

Cost	\$25,440
Savings	\$42,165
TOTAL	\$16,725

STRONG PAYOUT

on Apartment Life Investment

66% ↑

¹⁴ This graphic is from: <https://apartmentlife.org/multifamily-industry/resident-retention>