

The Continuing Story of God's Providence at SGBC 2.3

By: Pastor William Heinrich and Pastor Johnnie Sloan

Providence is the actions of God in History to which He brings to pass His sovereign purposes. It is Specifically God acting in the lives of His chosen people. God has always been a providential God as clearly seen in the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, Paul, and especially the incarnate Jesus.

We will break into yet another story of God's providence and look at one small church, "Sovereign Grace Baptist Church." Even this is too big a story to tell, and where do we start? Perhaps we should begin with Billy who was taken to church every Sunday by his parents. It was the Old German Baptist Brethren Church located at 2766 N. Dakota Avenue, Modesto, California. When he was 21 years old Billy met and married an Old German Baptist Brethren girl from Kansas, Ellen. Soon he and Ellen would have a family of four.

When Billy, now called Bill or William, turned 26 years of age, God saved him. This act of the sovereign grace of God brought an abrupt and wonderful change in Bill's life. He and Ellen were baptized and joined the Old German Baptist Brethren Fellowship on N. Dakota. Soon two Bible Studies were being taught by Bill in their home.

In January of 1971 God began making the first of many changes in Bill's life. Bill began attending San Francisco Baptist Theological Seminary and began taking his family to La Loma Grace Brethren Church and then later the Ripon Grace Brethren Fellowship. The next major change was the move from California to Indiana to attend Grace Seminary. Upon graduation of seminary, Bill was called of God to the First Baptist Church of Delphi, Indiana. He served the Lord twelve and a half years as the Senior Pastor. In 1986, our sovereign God in His providence made more changes. He led the Heinrich family back to California to serve Him for fifteen years at the First Baptist Church of Ceres as their Senior Pastor. The stay at FBC was very fruitful. Every month with few exceptions new converts were being baptized. The sanctuary was overflowing into the small chapel. But God's providence soon revealed He had another plan. The fruitful ministry of fifteen years was over, and a great challenge began to unfold.

On Aug 19, 2001, a small group of about 20 people led by Pastor William Heinrich met in the home of Andrew and Kendra Fletcher for "church". The name and the fellowship of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church was formed. Even the name that was chosen by the small group in Pastor Heinrich's front yard acknowledged this was surely a work of God's providence. Soon God's careful hand was seen again. This time the kind people of Central Seventh Day Adventist Church opened their doors to the members of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church (SGBC) and allowed the Sunday rental of their beautiful facilities when they were not in use by their own congregation who met on Saturday. From the very beginning God placed on Pastor Heinrich's heart the necessity of having a building to call their own, and a building fund was established. During the time that SGBC was at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the church was blessed with the visitation ministry of Pastor Shepard and the youth ministries of Pastor Worrell.

After almost three years of meetings, God put it on the hearts of Casey and Chris Van Ryes to show us a fine building on Kansas Avenue. The advantage to the new facilities was that it could be used seven days a week, but the rent was too great for our church alone. Once again God provided. The space was to be shared with the Harvest Fire Empowerment Center. The relationship with Pastor Jerry Smith and his wife Anita was very sweet. During the years we shared the building, Johnnie Sloan became the Assistant Pastor of SGBC and began taking on half the preaching. This Act of God's Providence began way back in 1994 when Johnnie and his wife came under the mentorship of Pastor Heinrich. Years of leading and teaching prepared him for the future ministry at SGBC. What a wonderful blessing they have been to the church.

Throughout this time, the "Building Fund," as it became known, began to grow. After looking for a building diligently for two years, God led Pastor Heinrich full circle back to the very place where "Billy" got

his start: the property owned by the Old German Baptist Brethren on North Dakota. When it was known the church would be sold, Pastor Heinrich requested to be given first opportunity of purchase. However, when the church listed the property, the price was far beyond what SGBC could offer. Then property values began to decline and time passed. Soon it was sold to another group and it seemed God had told us no, so we continued looking elsewhere. A few months later the other group changed their mind about purchasing the Dakota property.

Pastor Heinrich, armed with faith the size of a mustard seed and an additional two years of building fund savings, approached the selling agent and an agreement was made. This too is not without its own amazing account of God's sovereignty.

Excitement was seen in the Dakota Church members to sell to someone who grew up there, just as it was with Pastor Heinrich and the entire membership of SGBC. A search began for a sufficient loan. The membership had saved in the six and a half years of their existence enough money to place a down payment of one-third of the asking price. But banks still do not like to loan to churches, so God provided a much better way.

In God's gracious providence funding was provided. Two years earlier, approximately the time when SGBC first looked at the Dakota property, the Aurora Baptist Church had closed and sold. A portion of the sale price was promised to the California Association of Regular Baptist Churches to invest and use the interest earned to start new churches. Just when SGBC needed a loan, the money became available. A loan was granted from the CARBC with an interest rate far below what the banks offer, combined with a smaller loan provided by a Christian individual at a lower interest rate than the bank. An agreement was achieved with the Church's bank to cash their certificates early without penalty. Sovereign Grace now had the necessary funds to purchase the property. All the final papers were signed on Pastor and Ellen's Anniversary, Feb. 13th. The first service was held on Feb 17th in the basement because of work being done upstairs. Then came the much anticipated first service in the sanctuary. Much emotion and tears were shown causing Pastor Heinrich some difficulty at the start of his sermon.

All of this is part of God's sovereign grace, and we are supremely grateful, but the story continues. The large down payment left SGBC short of needed money for the many improvements left to be done. However, God knows this and is seeing to completion the work He has begun.

First, a man said He would sell the carpet to us at cost; then the manufacturer reduced the price to an amount lower than what a dealer pays. Then, two Christian men said they wished to lay the carpet as an act of worship at a reduced rate. A backhoe was needed to complete some drainage work on the property. God provided someone with his own equipment who was willing to donate his labor to complete the work needed. Next, a Christian painter offered to paint the church free of charge to us. The paint store sold to us below contractor price and gave us fifteen gallons for free. God also worked out an unusual concession for the church sign. At the "Pastor and Wives" retreat in Cambria, a pastor from Gardena offered a "Wolfe" range free, for our kitchen. A man in our church volunteered to get it. The tile was donated by three different people for the three upstairs bathrooms as well as an antique mirror.

God also moved to raise up people to lead and see to completion the various improvements. Ken Ernst was the vital and tireless real estate overseer. Todd Heinrich oversaw the drainage needs. Mickey Prescott and Todd saw the Sunday School rooms to completion with vital help from many, especially Michael Marti in heating, Mike Boyd in Sheetrock, and the free advice from James Fultz heating and air specialist. Steve Bell oversaw the removal of the old tile upstairs and the carpeting. The removal of the tile was also donated. General décor was in the able hands of Anne Ernst and Becky Heinrich. The nursery was painted with a Noah's ark theme by Brenda Rogers. The sign was seen to completion by Pastor Sloan. He also oversaw the painting of the sanctuary done for free by Kenny Chapman. Moving was in the able hands of Jim Collins and Doug Shipper. The platform was build by Sergio Magana and his brother Jose, who donated all their labor. Landscaping was donated by the able horticulturist hands of Steven Lybolt. Dan Matthew was used to jump

start the bathroom remodel, and Mike Matox saw it to completion, with special help by Edgar Wheeler and Doug Schipper on tile. God raised all these up to provide the wisdom and labor as a sacrificial gift to God through His Church. Others that must be mentioned for repeated help are James Parra, Mike Baca, Jeremy Blancarte, Ellen Heinrich, Randy Gisler, and members of the Polovin Family. Add to this list the cheerful and lively help provided so freely by many others.

Since God's providence doesn't stop, we must acknowledge more has happened even since this was written. I will continue this, listing each thing and rejoicing often. Our God moves in providence in many ways. It is thrilling to look to the future of this ministry and see what the amazing and Providential God will do here. We encourage believers to look for providence, and you will be awestricken with how good God is to His people, bringing His will to pass and blessing His born again Children.

This is my second sitting to put in order God's providence at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church.

On April 13, 2008, SGBC dedicated their new building. The day was very special with the State Rep of the CARBC as our speaker for the morning and evening service. SGBC fed about 180 people for lunch and the 2:00 service was simply full of people. Proper recognitions and appreciation were extended. Then Pastor Heinrich read the Providential Story followed by testimonies of what the new building means to them, given by the Schipper and the Baca families. The last 30 minutes were given to The Eternal Praise singers who exalted the Lord in music. The whole day was a time of exalting the grace and goodness of God. The offering taken for an Air conditioner was over \$2,000 and the Eternal Praise singers turned back our check to them, stating it is to go for the air conditioner. So, even while celebrating providence God still displays it to Sovereign Grace in marvelous ways.

To finish the class rooms took a lot of volunteers and many hours of work to get done the night before the dedication service. For example, a man visited our church saying he had a paint sprayer and would be happy to paint the classrooms downstairs for us. Again God supplied our need.

By the end of May, Pastor Heinrich received a phone call from Baptist Builders Club to tell the church they were sending \$10,000 as a gift toward our need of an air conditioner. Again God in providence is supplying our need. We then began to get bids to install air conditioners in the upstairs portion of the church. The bids ranged from \$30,000 to \$40,000. A friend of one of our members gave a bid of \$13,700. We had enough money for this and began to get permits and electrical. The MID told us they would charge about \$1,200 to bring in a 400 amp service. They for some reason, no doubt God, later said there would be not be any charge. The new classrooms still lacked carpet so the Lord took care of 4 of the 6 class rooms by providing free carpet. A house sold and the new owner wanted tile where carpet was and it was ours free for taking it away. The basement is a hot place in the summer and too cold for children's classrooms in the winter. Therefore, the desire for heating and air in the basement was made known to God and others. A family visiting our church learned of it and offered SGBC a 5 ton unit as a gift. Praise the Lord for His continuing providential care. The drainage for the property was completed in September with the rock being the only cost to the church. The back hoe and labor was donated. The churches copy machine was needing to be replaced so the need was put in the bulletin. One of our members offered the church his copy machine.

Perhaps the greatest part of God's sovereign care of SGBC has to do with her growth. God is continually bringing new people to visit the church and many return. His goodness is as rain drops on a hot day. The love of God's word shown by those who attend SGBC can only mean a house of Holy Spirit regenerated believers.

To be continued.....

This continuation added July 15 2010

After a great deal of time I felt again burdened to continue the story of God's providence at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church. With volunteer help, 2 offices were built out of a room in the North end of the church. The cost was nominal. Also blinds for all our sanctuary windows we purchased at cost and installed by Steve Lybolt and the Christian men who sold them to us. The installation was free to the church. A desire to improve the kitchen was met by an amazing price for granite to cover all the countertops. A new kitchen cabinet with a double sink was built by Mickey, covering water and gas pipes with a new wall. Kenny again was generous to Sovereign Grace Baptist Church when he painted the entry into the fellowship hall and all the tables.

The year 2010 was met with extending the chain link fence in front, matching what was already there. This allowed a much safer place for the children to play. Next a new play area for smaller children was fenced in on the Southeast corner of the church. Matching fence was used and the area was filled with sand. Again we were blessed with a man in our church that has skills in the area of fence building. Then a friend of the church got us sand at a very reasonable price. Electrical needs were satisfied twice by Dennis Adkins, a Christian who desired not to be paid for he was doing it for the Lord.

Sycamore trees to the East and southeast of the church were still not responding to the additional water that had been supplied through the gracious efforts of Jay Friesen, so severe trimming was needed. Again the work day brought out many workers and a job was well done. Later a larger tree limb was cracking and Doug got his friend to remove it. He came and trimmed other trees for almost nothing. He did it for the Lord.

This year, 2010, Pastor Sloan was ordained. Pastor Heinrich thought it would be nice if the church sent him to Israel for his ordination gift. It only took a month and a half and all the money came in. All this grace and more in that the giving continued to be above the budgeted amount.

Again we returned to the fellowship hall. Portable partitions were purchased to make an additional classroom. This allows the room to remain the same size while having another classroom. Also Steve Bell built a new library after Steve & Brenda Rogers removed the old one. Steve's work is so beautiful and his heart very generous to the church. Some of the women of the church have also painted the posts and west wall. Kenny has beautifully painted the South entrance. The basement has a great face lift and all through God's generous providence.

The good gifts of God come big and small but all are precious. Steve Bell gave the church an excellent copy machine, allowing our old one to be assigned to the basement. A contract for repair it held in the new one but not the old one. Here again God's providence is seen. Tim Crawford has twice fixed the old one and he too wants God's blessing not our money.

As we close this update, it goes without saying God's providence has not always been flowers without thorns. Some of the thorns dug deeply and caused festering sores. For example, one of our members turned her back on obeying the Lord and refused to repent. We also had two members go through potentially terminal illness. This truly rocked the fellowship. But God in grace drew us together and we were allowed again to smell the flowers. God providence always leads to good but it has taken us through what we might call bad.

This continuation added July 11 2012

It is always good to assess where we are as a church and take stock of what the Lord has done through His gracious Providence. As we continue the story of God's Providence in this our eleventh year we can praise God for many new blessings and future hopes.

The greatest blessing we have received in the last two years is wonderful new families who worship and serve with us. It is great to see new folks jump right in with our already faithful members and minister. It seems not only has God given us people, but people who have a real heart to serve. And each area of service is a beautiful providence in its own right. For example, The Meisners have come and brought wonderful abilities with them. Steve has helped with much needed improvements around the property including a further improvement of the previously mentioned basement facelift, our new barbecue area outside and a much-needed walkway to the men's restroom outside. Other families have even more recently as well and we look forward to seeing God use them at SGBC.

Another new family that has truly blessed SGBC is actually part of a combination providence that shows the marvelous work of God. The McAteers have come and jumped right in to the ministry at SGBC. Marty has helped serve as usher and also worked to make our lawn look wonderful as well as being available in many other areas. His wife Vicky as a paralegal has been instrumental in the next huge provision of the Lord – our new and better loan.

God has worked it out through our fellowship (CARBC) that we were able to consolidate our two loans into one that not only is shorter in time, but will save nearly \$400.00 a month and thousands over the life of the loan. So God not only prepared the financial situation, but brought Vicky's name to the mind of Pastor Heinrich in such a way as to work it all out. This was amazing!

In 2011, after a trip to visit family, Pastor Heinrich had an epiphany to begin a Youth Group and with a few families, H2O (His to Own) was born. The Lyons took leadership and this ministry exceeded all expectations. The kids bonded and the Lyons provided exciting and educational events every week for them. With their hard work a solid foundation was laid that we are grateful to God for. Since then, Steve Meisner has graciously taken over that ministry and it remains successful. What a blessing a thriving Youth Group is to our church!

Other families have jumped in with both feet as well. The Benedicts and Daltons have become vital parts of SGBC. Adam Benedict has facilitated some much needed property work at SGBC. One notable thing is getting help from a local community member to spray our trees – for free! They have never looked better. We're grateful for his work as well as the work of all those who are so faithful with the building and grounds of SGBC. A good example is Richard Hesse who faithfully sprays the whole property for weeds – what a blessing! The Building and Property Committee has done a great job. We are excited about potential future projects too which could include a Youth Room and/or more Sunday School classes! Maybe in the next Providence update.

Also, since the last update there has been quite a few Men's Fellowship Breakfasts put on by Jim Sauer and Mom's Time Out meetings by Ellen Heinrich. In both of these gatherings, God has really built strong relationships and bonded the men and women of SGBC together in very special ways.

Since the last update there have been many meaningful ways in which the providential hand of the Lord has moved with us. We had a wonderful 10th Anniversary celebration in which the whole community was invited (and many came!) to a free breakfast at the church. We put on display our gratitude for God's blessings to us for all to see. Many came and were thankful to get to know us better. It was a real outreach which was evidenced by the fact that a family who lost a loved one that is not a church-going family asked us to help them with his service. A service in which the gospel was clearly preached.

We ended the last update with what might be called difficult providence. With the many blessings come things we might struggle with. For example, we have had many invaluable members leave for various reasons which is always difficult. We have seen some apparently walk away from the Lord even to the point of church discipline. We have had families struggle with very difficult situations – like the Jacobsohns and their son David’s cancer as well as Darlene Summers’ own battle with the same – the Lord has been gracious to both, but the difficulty is there. One very notable difficulty is the loss of Ken Ernst to his battle with cancer. His involvement in SGBC cannot be overstated. The providence story up till his death this year has Ken woven all through it. Yet the Lord’s Providence is evident even now as some of Ken’s last words hang in pendant form on his beautiful wife’s neck – “He is allways in charge”. Even the misspelling shows Providence! All ways and always! This is Providence.