

August 16, 2021

Written history of Dwayne Stinson re: Swansboro Partnereship

Dear Hannah and Carol-

I apologize. I got your email at work back in July and meant to circle back around to it from my home computer, which is where all my Swansboro related stuff is. I'm willing to interview, but I thought I'd give responses in writing just in case you find you don't need to meet.

1. How are you currently personally involved in the partnership between Koinonia, LCU, and Reveille?

I am not currently involved.

1. When did you first get involved with this partnership and for how long have you been involved?

My initial involvement came as part of my role as Director of Youth Ministries, beginning in August 2006. My involvement was minimal except perhaps serving as a driver/chaperone for Day Camp when the children went to Swansboro Elementary for a visit. I honestly don't remember a lot of direct connections to Swansboro's partnership with Reveille (which then was centered on the Micah Project and the mentoring of elementary students by Reveille members). My most direct involvement was through the Cosby/Dillard family, because Antonio Dillard (and later Olivia Cosby, his sister) were actively involved in youth group.

When Katie (then Anthony, now Gooch) came on staff as Associate Pastor, Katie and I attended at least two community meetings in Swansboro together, plus a presentation by VCU students in the masters program for city planning and development (I don't know the official title of the program), and we were able to meet members of the community and to learn more about the community's needs and desires for its future. The neighborhood meetings met at Koinonia.

In the summer of 2008 our youth ministry had received a \$10,000.00 "Calling Congregations" grant that included money for three internships. We agreed that one of the interns would come from a church in Swansboro, so Tavrck Gray, the youth director at Morning Star Baptist Church, served as our summer youth intern.

On several occasions we invited middle school youth from Swansboro to join our middle school Jeremiah Project mission teams, and some of those youth came back and remained connected to our youth group.

Those were the beginning of my more direct involvement in Swansboro.

1. What are some key moments in the development of this partnership and when did these take place?

The biggest step by which I had a role in our partnership with Swansboro was the decision to redirect the traditional youth summer mission trip in 2013 to a local focus in Swansboro. I'm attaching the original proposal.

This happened as I was reading *Almost Christian* by Kenda Creasy Dean in April 2012, right around the time Cathy Armistead (then the Music Director) and I were preparing to submit a budget for the traditional 2013 out of state mission trip/choir tour. My estimated budget for that trip was \$60,000.00. On a Saturday afternoon in April, I read these words in Kenda's book: "Mission is not a trip or a youth activity, a silent cousin to evangelism, or an optional model of youth ministry. Mission is the business that congregations are in. Christ views young people as participants in God's mission rather than as targets of ours. God does not send out a few teenagers in a church van to represent Christ to the world on behalf of the church. God sends the whole church..." (Dean, *Almost Christian*, 97).

I sat there thinking "So what if...what if we invested the \$60k we would normally spend on a trip, which included renting two charter buses for the 10 days, plus food and housing for the team--what if we invested that money locally in Swansboro and really kick-started the connection between Reveille and Swansboro?" I called Cathy Armistead immediately, expecting her to flip out. These trips were a huge investment by the youth choir, with performances in several venues. I did not expect her to like such a change of plans. Instead, however, Cathy responded "Dwayne, I've been trying to figure out how to talk with YOU about this. I want the youth choir to do "Jesus Christ: Superstar" but we will need additional adults on the cast, and the set is too complicated to take on the road. It would be ideal if we could perform it in Richmond."

On top of this combination of events, the summer of 2012 saw 6 trips between mid-June and Mid-August (3 weeks of middle school Jeremiah Project mission trips, a week of high school Habitat, a high school international trip, and Music Week at Lake Junaluska for the choir). We needed to reset our schedule anyway. This shift really allowed us to revamp the flow of the schedule.

I took the attached proposal to the Missions Committee, then to Church Council, which approved \$125,000.00 for the construction of a Habitat home, plus additional youth mission projects in the neighborhood that would involve middle schoolers and younger children. The plan was for the youth to kick off construction of the home, which then the entire congregation would support over a 4 month period so that Reveille members were in the community regularly, engaging with neighbors, getting to know the area, feeling more comfortable there. We built our fall stewardship campaign around this Swansboro mission.

In early summer 2013, Christopher Cantone (summer intern) and I went through the Swansboro neighborhood for several blocks around the Habitat Home we would build, meeting neighbors, getting to know them.

We hoped to do a number of things, some of which fell through for logistical reasons:

- 1) Sponsor music and sports camps for Swansboro Elementary students.
- 2) Work on the Habitat home.
- 3) Have some projects middle schoolers (too young to work on a Habitat site) could do in the community. We connected with Project: Home to set up some of those projects.
- 4) Create a community garden at Swansboro Baptist Church, in partnership with their Scout Troop.
- 5) Build a cake walk platform for Swansboro Elementary

1. What barriers were there and/or continue to exist?

The biggest barrier was communication. We had difficulty connecting with the school's music teacher in ways that allowed us to promote the music camp. Also, Morningstar Baptist Church wanted to charge our camp for the use of their facility. We eventually eliminated the sports/music camp aspect of the trip.

5. What successes were there and/or continue to exist?

6. Do you view this partnership as a success? Why or why not?

I view that summer 2013 as a turning point in the relationship, because it did indeed get more Reveille members invested in the community in Swansboro, and I believe that partnership has grown deeper in the last 8 years.

5. What do you like best about the partnership?

The Swansboro partnership leverages Reveille's strengths (people, financial resources, passion for service, very skilled congregation) with the community's strengths (long-time residents very invested in the future of the community, local churches, including Koinonia, the strong programming at Swansboro Elementary) in ways that help two communities that may not otherwise interact find common ground and work together in ways that enrich both groups.

5. What has been most beneficial for you, the congregations, and the community as a whole?

6. What improvements would you like to see in the interactions between these churches and their congregations?

7. Do you have any advice for churches who may be interested in starting a partnership similar to this one?

8. Is there anything you have not said yet that you would like to add?

My interaction and history are limited but hopefully will be useful as you move forward. Please let me know if you would like to talk more.

in Christ,

Dwayne