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Harvest on a mission to serve

By JENNIFER SHEA

Correspondent

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A self-described "loaves and fishes" ministry, The Harvest strives to "be God's hands, extended to the community," said longtime senior pastor Jim Minor.

"We want to affect someone's life so that their tomorrow is better than their yesterday."

Minor and his wife, Peggy, have pastored side by side for more than 30 years. Faith is a family affair; Minor's daughter, Erin, is Harvest's executive director and his son, Dan, an associate pastor, "will eventually take over and be the pastor here," Minor said.



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO / JENNIFER SHEA

The Harvest, formerly Harvest Tabernacle, led by Jim Minor, senior pastor, center and his children, Erin Minor, executive director, left; and Dan Minor, associate pastor, on right; strives to be a "fishes and loaves church," Jim Minor said.

Minor said that when he was a young preacher in Miami, he felt that churches were not doing enough to reach out to the community. He described himself as a young man from a single-parent household, "poor, heartbroken, confused and angry."

Thus he understands people in the community who feel the same way.

His faith journey began when he "heard God's message at my uncle's church.

"And I was one of those who desperately needed to hear that God loved me — in spite of myself," Minor said.

He strives, he added, to bring the message of hope through faith to the community.

Upon moving to Sarasota 30 years ago, Minor said that it represented the "great divide between the haves and the have-nots, for many, many years."

"It was about containment — keeping the illegal activity in one area," Minor said.

"But now people realize that kind of activity cannot be isolated, it affects the whole community."

Formerly Harvest Tabernacle, now "rebranded," Erin Minor said, simply as The Harvest, the church's core is pastoring the community.

"We are different," Dan Minor said. "Most churches pick one or two evangelical issues — like abortion — and that's their focus, but Dad looks at where people really need help."

Erin Minor, seamlessly in sync with her sibling, explained, "That means education,

anger management classes, financial literacy classes and providing services like Harvest House, a residential program for men and women who suffer from substance abuses. We have programs addressing every single human need."

She added that Harvest has contracts with the Florida Department of Corrections as well as Veterans' organizations that fund lodging and treatment for both Veterans and post-prison release substance abusers.

Homelessness and substance abuse, Dan Minor said, "strip a person of their dignity. Our programs restore that dignity and build them back up."

When asked about duplication of services, Jim Minor said that Harvest "has made a greater impact on Sarasota than the Salvation Army — than any other organization.

"We are the third largest distributor of food," he added. "We have a budget of \$2.8 million a year and over \$8.4 million in assets.

"We set the pace — there are others doing it and we respect them, but this is what our faith comes down to — loving people that no one else will love," Minor said.

He keeps his faith via "people," Minor said.

"When you love people that no one else will love, it touches the heart of God and he responds through provision," he added.

Erin Minor added, "We do — whatever love looks like to a person.

"We provide whatever they need — we don't limit ourselves because we are dealing with human beings.

"We don't say no, we just figure out a way to do what needs to be done."

Partnerships, Dan Minor said, are vital to Harvest; "Trader Joe's has been crazy generous to us — we pick up food daily from them."

"We are efficient, no other organization can do what we do."

Dan Minor said that the people he serves are not shuffled from agency to agency, their needs are met at Harvest, "every facet, and as a result, we are family. Our people look at my mom and dad as their mom and dad," he added. "We are siblings.

"They are not a burden, we are family."

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