

How a Prophetic Word and a Miracle Paved the Way for the Morris Cerullo Legacy International Center

Prophets never retire. That's what Morris Cerullo says he heard from God years ago—and that prophetic word inspired him to build the Morris Cerullo Legacy International Center in San Diego, California. When it opens this December, the Legacy Center will feature a hotel resort, a spa, a performing arts center, a restaurant, a library, conference facilities and attractions designed by theme park engineers. Cerullo says for him, it's about building a place that will carry on his evangelistic mission long after he's gone to be with the Lord.

"I heard the voice of God say to me, 'Morris, do you know that prophets never retire?'" Cerullo says. "I asked God what He meant. He told me, 'I do not want this ministry that I have given to you, that has raised up millions of nationals worldwide, to ever die.' It was at that moment that I knew God had called us to build Him a legacy center."

Jim Penner, the Legacy Center's executive director, says they created the facility to be warm and inviting for nonbelievers. They want to draw tourists visiting San Diego to stay at their site—regardless of their religious affiliation—and have a positive experience with Jesus on the campus.

"For somebody who's secular, walking into a church can be a very intimidating process," Penner says. "But this feels like a very warm and inviting place to come, a very safe place for people to explore their faith. ... If this is a place that becomes known as warm and inviting, then that's truly celebrating what we as Christians should be about. You know,

Jesus told us to go into all the world and reach the people with the gospel. And that's what this is attempting to do."

But the journey to the December launch has been a difficult one, filled with supernatural miracles.

"After miracle after miracle, the vision has not changed, but it certainly has intensified," Cerullo says. "The Legacy Center is a destination with a great destiny."

Miracles in the Making

Cerullo has seen the Holy Spirit move mightily over seven decades of ministry. According to estimates by Morris Cerullo World Evangelism (MCWE), Cerullo has preached to millions of people in 93 nations on all seven continents. He has seen miraculous healings—including his own. But both Cerullo and Penner were blown away by the miracle of how they acquired the property for the Legacy Center.

The Legacy Center is situated on prime real estate along Interstate 8, just a mile and a half from SeaWorld. The land originally housed the Mission Valley Resort, before it was overtaken by a series of financial issues following the 2008 mortgage crisis. Penner says the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) took over the land and appointed a receiver, with whom MCWE attempted to negotiate for the property. The receiver was uninterested in selling to a ministry.

One year later, MCWE learned that the property was going to be auctioned off. The ministry was told many big developers would be there, but if MCWE really wanted the property, it was welcome to try and bid on it too.

"Dr. Cerullo sent our CEO [Lynn Hodge] to the auction and gave him a fixed number to put on the property: It was \$18 million," Penner says. "He said, 'Don't pay a dollar more than that.' Basically, a million dollars an acre, because it's 18

acres—and that's a highly discounted price if you know anything about real estate in San Diego. So Lynn showed up at the auction, and nobody was there at the courthouse. Lynn was the only one who showed up.

"After about 20 minutes, the auctioneer says, 'Well, I guess we better get started.' And so the auctioneer says, 'I'll be bidding on behalf of the bank. The bank has given us a number that they'll bid up to in order to retain the property.' They started bidding—but it's just Lynn and the auctioneer. Finally, the auctioneer called Lynn over and said, 'Look, let's cut to the chase. The bank has given me a fixed number of \$18 million that they cannot exceed on their behalf. ... You've got to give me something over \$18 million—even if it's just a penny more.' Lynn reached in his pocket, pulled out a penny and put it on the counter. So for \$18 million in cashier's checks and a penny, he got the property."

MCWE leaders internally refer to it as "The One-Penny Miracle." Penner says he has told that story many times to developers in San Diego, and every time, they ask, "Why weren't we at that auction?" After all, it was highly valuable property acquired at a steal of a price. Penner says the answer is simple: "God didn't want them there. He wanted that property for Legacy."

Growing the Vision

Once the land was acquired, it came time to build the Legacy Center. Originally, Penner says the vision was simple: Build a facility where foreign nationals can come to be trained by MCWE in how to reach their home countries for Christ. It would be an educational training center, with programs offered both in-person and remotely online.

But then the vision expanded.

"We thought, Well, if we have this great training facility here, we're going to need some place to house those who may

want to come for training," Penner says. "So let's build a world-class hotel. And if we're building a world-class hotel, that means we're probably going to have a lot of San Diego tourists staying in that hotel as well, because we won't use it 365 days a year. And if we have all these tourists coming to stay in a world-class hotel, what do we have for them to do while they're on the campus? So we developed the whole Experiences Center with technology and theaters and exhibits that would be exciting for the average tourists to come through, to learn a little bit more about this God who loves them."

When it opens, the Legacy Center will have three main buildings. The first building is a luxury hotel and spa. The second building, the Pavilion, houses a 500-seat performing arts theater, conference facilities, office space, a library and a restaurant. Finally, the third building—the Welcome Center—features a number of theme park-style attractions and experiences. These include an interactive globe, an international market styled after ancient Jerusalem marketplaces, a replica of the Wailing Wall, fountain and light shows, catacombs to explore, a themed children's area and even a dome theater. Cerullo says his favorite attraction is Wings Over Israel.

"A group from Disneyland—that produced many of the top attractions there—came to me early in the Legacy Center process, and together we formulated an experience that is not available anywhere else in the world," Cerullo says. "We have created a 100-seat, four-dimensional interactive dome theater at a cost of nearly \$20 million that will take our Legacy Center guests on a 10-minute experience of soaring over the nation of Israel."

Some Pentecostals may hear these attractions being described and immediately think of Heritage USA, Jim Bakker's famous theme park/timeshare property hybrid. But Penner says the Legacy Center operates on a "completely different model."

“Think of if Hilton were going to build a convention hotel property,” Penner says. “That’s essentially what this is. It’s a convention hotel property that also happens to have conference facilities, attractions and all of that, but it is a hotel. It’s not a timeshare. ... It’s built for the public to use it. We’ll rent it out to civic groups or corporations in San Diego, just like they rent a ballroom at Hilton. And it’s a great gathering spot for people who are staying at neighboring hotels or for local San Diegans and tourists who are coming to the city. It’s an experiences place for people to enjoy. So that’s how it’s much different than Heritage.”

Ultimately, Penner believes it’s a miracle that the Legacy Center was built at all.

“The Legacy Center should not be sitting there, and it certainly shouldn’t be sitting there in the middle of San Diego, the third-highest tourist destination in the United States,” Penner says. “There’s just miracle after miracle that has happened. And God continually amazes me how, even when we don’t see that grand plan coming together, He times it all out. All those significances come together.”

Cerullo urges *Charisma*’s readers to come see the property for themselves, saying it’s made for them.

“The Legacy Center will continue our training of nationals worldwide—and our mandate to ‘build God an army’—and to reach every nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ, long after I am gone home to be with Jesus,” Cerullo says. “This ministry and vision will never die. ... Soon, [my wife] Theresa and I will be in heaven. [But] we built this Legacy Center for the body of Christ and for the world.”

READ MORE: For more miraculous stories, visit .

Joshua Olson is a freelance writer for Charisma.

CHARISMA is the only magazine dedicated to reporting on what the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of believers around the world. If you are thirsty for more of God's presence and His Holy Spirit, subscribe to CHARISMA and join a family of believers that choose to live life in the Spirit. [CLICK HERE](#) for a special offer.