

# Soquel Church Takes Fellowship to Those in Need

by Sheila Daniels

Creating a passage where the perception of truth can be delivered, whether it be through prose, science or action, quickens the breath of life.

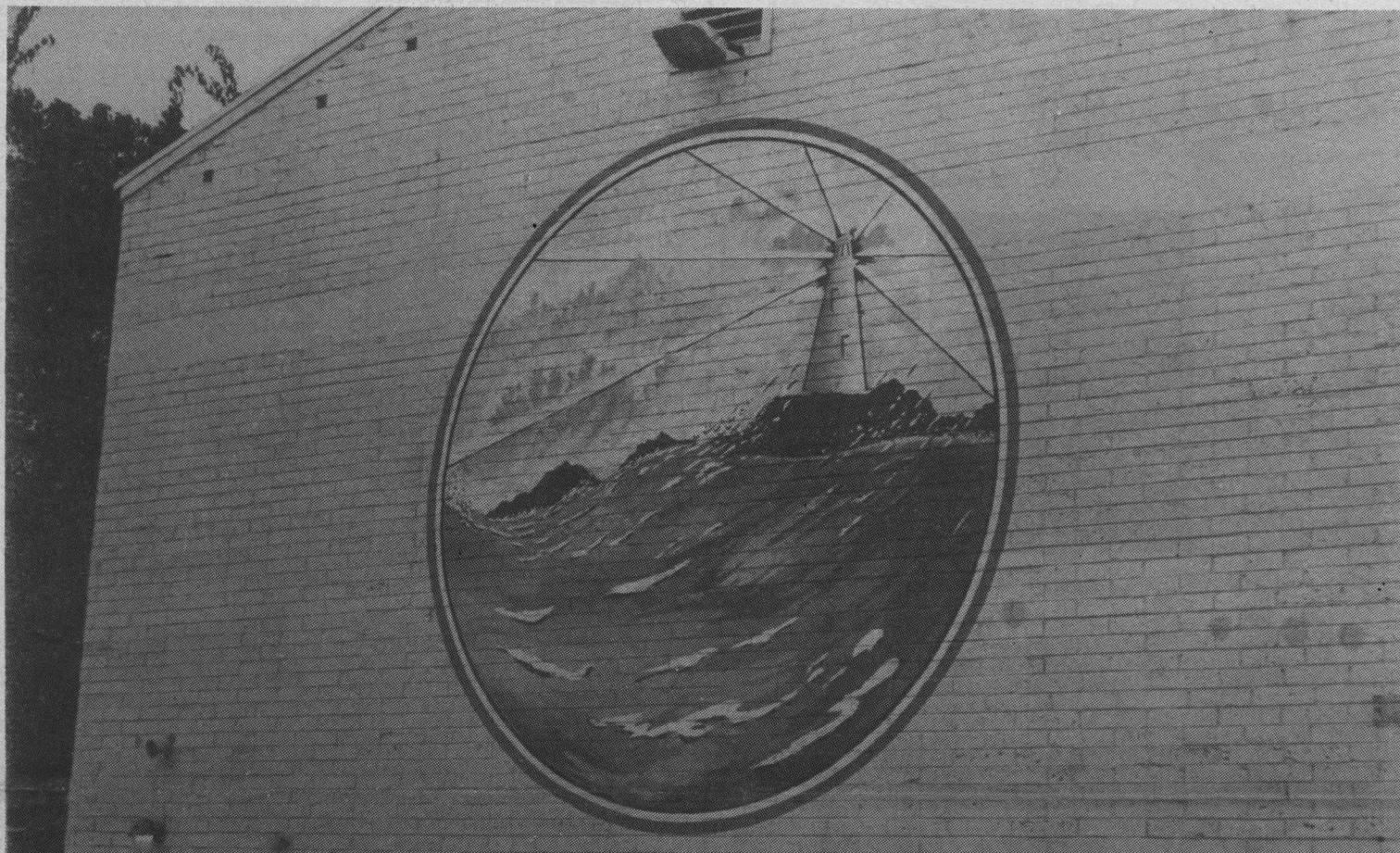
Although simple gestures of kindness and thinking seem pale next to documented works of enlightenment, in the minds and hearts of human beings, both simple and tangible inspirations transcend time and boundaries to create the essence of life.

What, then, inspires one to go beyond the self and reach out to someone who has little or no bearing on their life?

For Associate Pastor Allen Hankla and members of Soquel's Lighthouse Christian Fellowship Church it is, "The desire to express the love we have for people and, in a greater sense, the love we perceive from God and to help people receive restoration."

With a congregation of about 450, members of the Lighthouse Christian Fellowship Church, in Soquel Village, went beyond the call of good parishioners when they dedicated themselves to contributing and volunteering their services to those in need.

"We as a church were approached by a lot of people with material, emotional and spiritual needs," Hankla said. "We're trying to meet some of those needs."



A familiar sight near near Soquel Village, the Lighthouse mural.

The church, an unassuming building on Soquel Drive that ironically used to be a porno theatre, houses two outreach programs, The Food Pantry and A Heart To Serve.

For those who need support during difficult times, the church opens its pantry Wednesday evenings, 5:30 to

6:30pm, to provide people, of all nationalities, faiths and economic backgrounds, with packages of nutritional food items designed to last individuals and families three to four days.

"We felt that we could best meet some of the material needs of the people by

concentrating our efforts on a food pantry as opposed to just distributing funds or general monies," said Hankla.

If someone returns for handouts, one of the church staff sits down with the person and helps him or her work out a budget, depending on their financial situation.

"We see not only supplying them with some kind of sustenance, but also helping them navigate through life," Hankla said. "We try to make it more comprehensive than just a distribution [center]."

Taking a one-dollar offering once a month, designated for the pantry, enables the staff to buy items at cost from the food bank in Watsonville and, thanks to the benevolence of the parishioners, it is also possible to serve those with other needs.

By offering resources from prayer support, to preparing meals for the hungry and providing transportation or shelter for the homeless for a day or a week, church members began serving those with individual requests under the umbrella of A Heart To Serve.

"We made a list, so as people came to us we could direct them to different

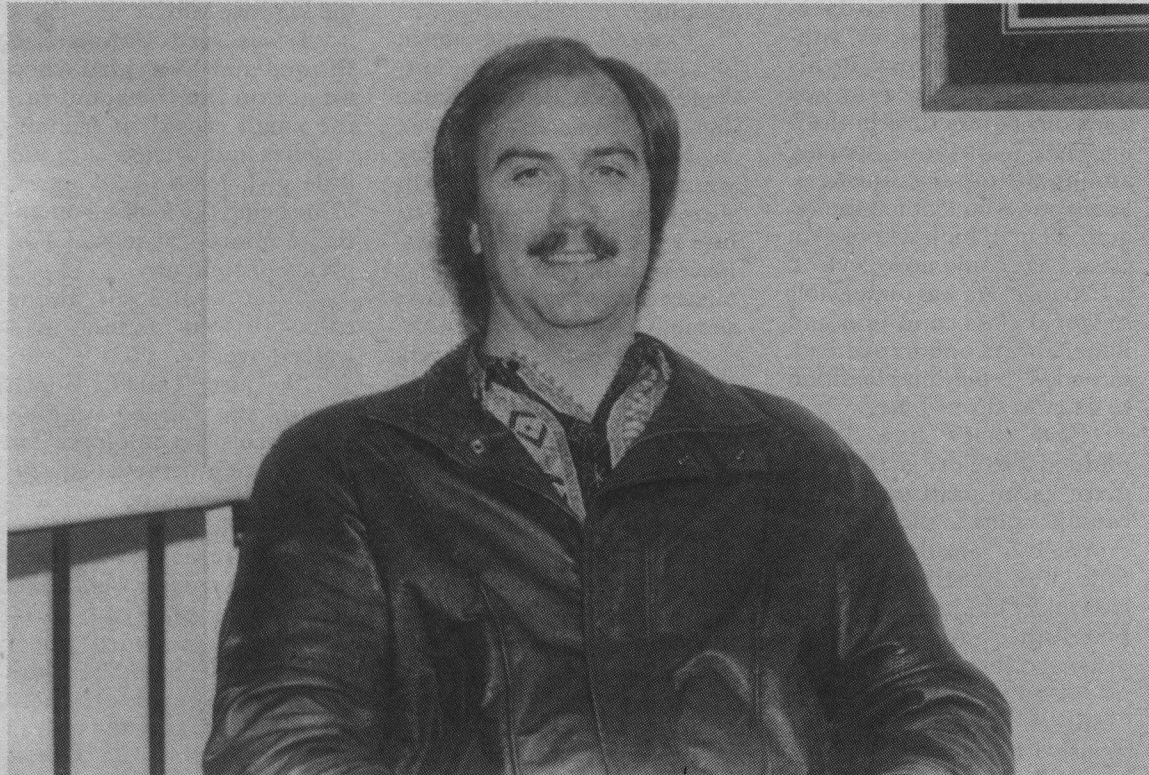
people who had these resources," Hankla said.

Since its inception six months ago, the program helped one lady make a move from Watsonville to Santa Cruz, by providing a place to stay and letting her use the telephone to follow up on some leads she had. Within days she was on her feet, but still returns to the church to pay her respects.

As for the Santa Cruz street person who decided to clean up his act after 20 years of alcoholism, church members not only worked on getting him involved in a detox program, but drove him to the center in Palo Alto as well.

"He's in detox right now and when he comes out, I'm sure we'll be involved in helping him," the pastor said. "It's complicated and in this case, it's a whole life style [change]."

Like a beacon in the fog, The Lighthouse Christian Fellowship Church, only 10 years old, brings a sense of assurance to sometimes bleak situations and offers a source of inspiration, enabling one to lift him or herself up by the bootstraps and see the light of a new life at the end of the tunnel. □



Pastor Associate Allen Hankla of Lighthouse Christian Fellowship Church.