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Posted on Sun, Mar. 27, 2005

Worship director spreads message through music

By JOE LIVERNOIS
Herald Salinas Bureau

Growing up in small Texas towns, Curt Coffield's memories of church music involved a guy with a baton standing in front of a choir.

The times have changed.

Coffield is now the worship director at Shoreline Community Church, a job in which he spends his Sundays whanging his electric guitar in front of a lively crowd of church-goers.

"Expressing our love of Christ through music is a very big priority with Shoreline," said Coffield, 35. "Sometimes I have to pinch myself I feel so lucky. I do the music I love in the context of my church."

Coffield will be on the road during the coming months, serving as the worship leader -- or music leader -- for Promise Keepers, the traveling revival-like gatherings for men held in major-city arenas throughout the United States. And he is also helping Promise Keepers produce an album due for release in May.

Shoreline is among the largest churches in Monterey County, with about 3,000 members, despite the fact that it has never had its own building in which to celebrate Sunday services. During its 10 years, the church has met in five different locations, including the large tent in which it now holds services off Garden Road.

"We're a church that grows in spite of itself," said Coffield. The growth has included the creation of six different praise bands that provide music for Sunday services and other church functions.

The church has hired a musical director, John Wineglass, who has won two Emmy awards and who composes music and soundtracks for CBS and ABC.

Wineglass, who starts next month, will be able to expand Shoreline's existing musical offering, which is mostly contemporary Christian rock. "We want to be able to reflect the musical diversity of the community," said Coffield. "When the Bach festival comes to town, we want to be able to provide Bach. When the jazz festival is here, well..."

Coffield came to Monterey County about three years ago, after working for a church with 25,000

members near Chicago. He also spent several years with a touring praise band and has published several songs. He worked with Promise Keepers as its worship leader five years ago.

"I'm so grateful I'm able to do what I do," he said. "And I'm grateful that there has been a real movement to do music in churches now that is relevant to the culture."

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