

# partners

THE KINGDOM EXTENSION NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

## Kingdom Extension Community

### READY TO ENCOURAGE, RESOURCE OR SERVE YOU

**T**HE KINGDOM EXTENSION COMMUNITY is a team of ministry practitioners (we actually try to do this stuff; sometimes successfully) ready to walk with you on your ministry adventure. We don't do everything. We don't know everything. We don't even know all of the questions. But what we know and do, we are willing to share or pass along. Our purpose is defined by the following five statements:

- 1 To communicate and encourage a kingdom mindset and strategy for extending the kingdom.**
- 2 To assess local church potential for extending the kingdom within their contexts.**
- 3 To deliver up-to-date resources and workshops that provide creative solutions for extending the kingdom.**
- 4 To assist local churches in adopting concepts that will ultimately extend the kingdom within their contexts.**
- 5 To facilitate discussions among pastors and church leaders in district cohorts about kingdom extension within our cultural setting.**

Initially, as we get to know you and you get to know us, we plan to tell stories you might relate with, stories of churches and people doing what you are doing, or doing and want to do better, or what you want to do, but can't figure out how to start. We plan to help you discover and figure out how to apply the ideals of Kingdom ministry to your setting. We will suggest articles, books and video clips; share conversations; and provide links to other tools and resources.

In the not too distant future, we plan to roll out a couple of training events and sponsor a few localized round table discussions on themes that we think will scratch where some of you are telling us you itch. You can help us with this process by letting us

know what you would like to discuss or what you think might be helpful in your context. For now, you can send helpful info you have discovered and/or your questions to Les Cool (717-951-8433 or [revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net)).

We are also prepared to walk with you on your ministry journey. This might look like a brainstorming session, response to a ministry plan or proposal, arranging for a ministry coach to stand in your corner, or as needed training. Let's start a conversation that will lead to an exciting future for you and your church. ■



# Four Glimpses into **the Gospel in Action**

*One beautiful thing about the kingdom of God is the way he uses ordinary people in distinct locations to accomplish the same goal: sharing the truth about who Jesus is and why people need to know him. The following four stories provide a glimpse into some ways EC congregations are approaching kingdom ministry. These different stories are stitched together into the same tapestry of the Gospel message.*

## **1** You Never Know

*Anonymous account from a member of Journey 53.  
(Contact Rick Christman for info on this kind of lifestyle.)*

**YOU NEVER KNOW** what kind of connection God can make when you greet someone with a smile or a "Hello." Out walking the dog one night, I met a young single mom who looked like she wasn't having a good day. I introduced myself and found out she was in need of a one-week emergency babysitter so she wouldn't lose her job. I volunteered for the week and

that was the start of our friendship.

It was right around this week of babysitting that she found out she was pregnant with baby number two. Many a long night later as we talked, she became more comfortable with me and began to open up many other areas of her life which needed some clarity and direction. At first I did not think I had the time, but God reminded me that I did.

We started checking in with each other several times during the week. Because she does not drive, I started helping her to appointments as well as to the doctors. Our relationship has grown into more of a mother and daughter bond.

As her trust level grew, she began to ask where God is in all of the craziness going on in her life. My eyes lit up as I shared that God does not give us the stress, but he does provide the strength and comfort if we accept it.

I don't know what God has planned for this relationship, but I am a witness that when I make myself available to God he opens some amazing connections. "Whatever you have done for the least of these you have done for me" (Matthew 25:46).

## **2** Shifting Our Focus

*Les Cool (717.951.8433, [revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net))*

**A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO**, Akron Grace Church made a corporate decision to limit church activities to those that served either the Great Commission (**go and make disciples**) and/or Great Commandment (**love God and your neighbor**). We had been busy, maybe too busy. We had definitely been too busy to impact others "not part of us" for the Kingdom. We had become a lot, even mostly, about us.

This was painful at first as we made changes and cuts in current ministries to accommodate new ministries. We took a look at everything we were already doing and

asked hard questions – Does this serve the Kingdom or Akron Grace? Does this appeal to others or just us? Why do we do this? Or that? What should we do instead?

We restructured some favorite activities to be more attractive to our friends and neighbors, as well as others not part of us. This was difficult – being forced to do the same things in new ways. It sold easily until we realized it was just change in disguise. Ouch!

Along the way, we continued to tighten up the church calendar so that there were more free evenings for everyone, even our leaders.

Church meetings and gatherings with new formats meant more work in less time, and with fewer and shorter meetings. That meant we all had a chance to serve the Kingdom outside of the building.

We also began the process of shuffling people around in the pews to make room for new people. We have some who moved less than an inch to help this process. But others, more than we anticipated, began to play this new game in the sanctuary. A few sanctuary etiquette lessons helped us understand better how to be a welcoming church. These mini chats will need to be repeated and repeated so they stick.

The stories have increased over time . . . adults tutoring students in various contexts in our area, people

joining new activities to be around new people, church leaders stepping down from certain roles to make more time to be out of the church, teens not taking normal summer jobs so they can serve as Jesus' hands and feet, others spending

more time with people looking for a handout or a hand up (this has netted several people in our pews).

Now, a new kind of excitement buzzes when we are together. A new kind of person is stepping up to serve and lead. More people at

Akron Grace have new friends out in the community. Not projects! Friends. More visitors have stayed than had been our past experience. Our Kingdom stories are more about Jesus than about his Church represented at our building.

## 3

### Old Room, New Use, New Crowd

Q&A with Terry Jacobs, Riverhill EC Church, Clarion (814.538.9060, [jcoby106@comcast.net](mailto:jcoby106@comcast.net))

**Q What prompted you to start the ministry you call the Café?**

**A** Initially it was designed to reinvent Sunday school in a manner that was fresh, involved technology and was attractive for first time visitors.

**Q What about the café makes it a church ministry?**

**A** It is in a converted large Sunday school classroom and is open primetime Sunday morning, as well as Monday and Wednesday nights.

**Q Who runs the café?**

**A** It is run by our hospitality coordinator and her husband. It operates on the donations of the congregation.

**Q What is your involvement?**

**A** I enjoy drinking the coffee all week long and oversee the ministry media that is used.

**Q Who are you reaching with the café?**

**A** People our members and friends invite. We have had at least six salvation decisions that resulted from new visitors being invited to the café.

**Q What do you see developing out of the café?**

**A** We will be opening the café in the fall to the college students of our town on Friday nights. The Christian videos, movies and music will all be selected to lead a person to seek answers to life's

hardest questions: What happens after death? Have I committed the unpardonable sin? What does the Bible teach about abortion or homosexuality? Is there a God?

**Q How will you reach these students to let them know you exist?**

**A** We will be meeting with Christian groups on campus such as Campus Crusade and Intervarsity. We will be advertising in campus publications as well.

**Q Any suggestions for others interested in borrowing your idea?**

**A** Your core people of the church must buy into the vision and be willing to break from tradition.

## 4

### Kingdom Availability

Rev. Don Kerns (484.338.0009, [pastordon7@yahoo.com](mailto:pastordon7@yahoo.com))

**AS PASTOR OF** Family Ministries at St. Matthew's EC Church of Emmaus, most of my ministry is with kids, many unsaved or from marginal Christian families. A variety of approaches to connect with the families – praying that

the kids would lead their families to Christ, looking for personal opportunities to connect with these families – have not produced much fruit. But I continue to persevere in prayer and action, believing our Father is at work, listening to His

still small voice and determined to follow as he opens doors.

And then a parent reached out to me to "warn me" about a kid's sinful choices and to "chastise me" for not doing the "church" things she grew up with. We prayed and discussed having a family meal sometime to share what God is doing in their home. Yes! A real connection.

To my surprise, she texted me

late one night and asked for prayer for her uncle. Could I come over? I did. We met, discussed his alcoholism and need for Christ. God opened the door for him to step into a new life. His family, including two of the girls from Kids Club, laid hands on him and prayed for God to break the chains and deliver him from alcohol. He then asked Jesus

to forgive him and to come into his heart. WOW! I never experienced someone being so drawn into the kingdom.

I would like to say that he continues to be free of his vices, is attending AA meetings with a sponsor, and is committed to staying sober. Life is not always that clean. But God is good! This connection did

open the door for further conversation with his family and possible adult discipleship. Though my new friend isn't quite where he needs to be, his sisters are being drawn by God and the transformed life they might experience. The rest of the story is yet to unfold.

All I had to do was "be available" and follow God. ■

## RESOURCE CORNER

**Jesus: Pure & Simple** by Wayne Cordeiro is an invitation to reconsider our days, days that can be busy and complicated, wearing us down. Unfortunately, this can spill over into our service to the King. This book reminds me that our walk with Jesus should be just that, "pure and simple" (recommended by Andrew Brubaker).

**The King Jesus Gospel** by Scot McKnight is an excellent rethinking and refocusing of the Gospel. McKnight helps us process what the Bible says about the Gospel so we can go forth with the Gospel of Jesus (recommended by Les Cool).

**The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative** by Christopher Wright is for those interested in what the "missional" shift is all about and is a biblically faithful, thorough and compelling explanation of the mission of God in the world. Wright makes it clear that as God's people we are expected to continue in that mission not simply as one thing among others but as the fundamental purpose of the church in the world (recommended by Tim Seiger).

**More Than a Carpenter** by Josh MacDowell is a resource to respond to arguments against the knowledge of God. I have given this book to confused people and watched them feel challenged and somewhat pleased (recommended by Carlos Kelly).

## PRAYING FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Day of Prayer for Church Planting, the first Sunday of each month

### CURRENT PROJECTS:

#### 6 Planters and 7 Plants

- Ephrata, Pa . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
- Lancaster, Pa . . . Christ House Church (Tim King)
- Philadelphia & Allentown, PA . . . Comunidad Biblica (Rolando Diaz)
- Pottstown area, PA . . . Journey53 (Rick Christman)
- York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)
- York Pa . . . The Next Step (Carlos Kelly & Tim King)

#### 1 Restart / Revitalization

- Slatington, Pa . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)

#### 4 Informal Partnerships\* / 5 Missional Works / 0 Potential Adoptions

- Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
- Lehigh Valley, PA . . . Horizon (Bud Daneker)
- Millersville, PA . . . The Gathering (Juan Carlos Morales)
- Palmerton, PA . . . Gaming Grotto (Chris Bronico)
- Reedsville, PA . . . LifeTree Café (Jeff Byerly)
- Sinking Spring & Mohn's Hill, PA . . . Two Lifetree Cafés (Jerry Artz, Mohn's Hill & Mike Snedeker, Sinking Spring) \* "Off the Avenue" and "Canal Street"
- Sinking Spring, Pa . . . Fresh Expression Launches (Matt Hill – Pastor of Missional Ministries)
- Tallmadge, OH . . . New Direction (Tim Ream)

\* An "informal partnership" is just that, a loosely defined relationship between an established church and another church or church plant or church planter that is transitional or less precise than an adoption, plant or "out of that church" ministry. Some informal partnerships are based on use of space in a building; others involve overlapping ministry events. In the end, these partnerships may become more formal or will dissolve when the dust finally settles.

**KINGDOM EXTENSION COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** Rev. Leslie Cool, Associate & Chair; Bishop Rev. Bruce Hill; Rev. Ron Anderson, Mr. Andrew Brubaker; Rev. David Dick, Rev. Al Giles; Rev. Matt Hill; Rev. Carlos Kelly; Mrs. Linda Miller; Rev. Adam Roberts; Mrs. Michelle Roberts; Rev. Tim Seiger; Rev. Mike Snedeker; Rev. BJ Whitaker; Rev. Todd Wolfe.

partners 

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