

KINGDOM EXTENSION

I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward
to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize
for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.
Philippians 3:13 – 14 (NLT)

Kingdom Extension Community Members

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

Paul invites us to live forward, leaning into the life God makes possible. This life is here and now, and then and there. This life is what we have known, what we are currently experiencing, and more than we might imagine. That the life of the Church, and of our churches, should be wrapped up in such a package defines what we are about – God – his presence, his will, and his Kingdom. We are to be about becoming all Jesus died and rose to make possible.

God's mission "to create a people to enjoy and be enjoyed by" is the mission for which the Church and our churches exist. We are on mission, fulfilling Christ's high calling upon our lives, when we "go and make disciples." And we are most effective when we serve as Jesus' hands and feet and voice to/for/with our neighbors.

The Kingdom Extension Community (KEC) has been launched to serve these life-defining ideals by resourcing the pastors, leaders and churches of the Evangelical Congregational Church. We exist to point forward (reminders of the task), walk beside (as fellow travelers), celebrate (telling our stories), and provide resources (assist your serve).

The KEC has been and continues to serve the greater EC community by fulfilling five identified purpose 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 will 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 settings.

Charting the Course

Tasked to identify and communicate a way of life that serves the Kingdom of God and initiate conversations that might shift an entire denomination's thinking and doing is daunting, if not downright intimidating. Gathering a team of practitioners to lead these conversations was the first step and has produced a team of men and women who represent the EC Church. As we approach our first anniversary together, we have progress to report . . .

- Recognizing a bit of communication confusion, we began to develop a brief glossary of terms (e.g. Church/church, Kingdom, discipleship, missional, etc.) necessary for clearer communication. The first draft of this glossary has been passed along to the Bishop for further development.
- Identifying a need to celebrate our successes, we shifted the focus of the Partners Newsletter to reporting our ministry stories. The natural response to these stories is celebration: "Look at what God has done among us!"
- Observing a tendency among our churches to do what we have always done with the same results (while wanting other results), we have begun to identify ministry resources and inviting conversation around new ministry ideas and models.

- Recognizing the need for exposure to new ideas, we have identified and begun to promote various learning experiences designed to help pastors, church leaders and congregations engage in conversations about Kingdom thinking and ministries. A few of these include . . .
 - Fresh Expressions Vision Days (local gatherings to discuss new models for doing church and for church planting)
 - NAVS Community & Discipleship Trainings (one of many Navigator trainings designed to retool the local church for more effective discipleship)
 - Exponential 2017 and Regional Gatherings (church planting, though any pastor would benefit from this kind of event)
 - Missio Alliance National Gathering (conversations focused on Kingdom and missional ministries)

Navigating the Challenges

Seeking to encourage a lifestyle that goes against certain human habits, as well as against certain traditional church behaviors, quickly exposes one to the challenge of the task. Early research and conversations revealed truths (obstacles) that would need to be navigated.

- We recognized in our conversations with pastors, church leaders and others that the task of shifting thinking from “my/our church” to “His Kingdom” is no simple task. There will be no silver bullet.
- We identified the need for a significant shift in church education from “learning about God” to “creating disciples” as we anticipate more effective Kingdom ministry. Learning about God is content focused; discipleship is life-change focused.
- We observed natural barriers that keep people, even pastors, from attending “good for you” conversations and training events. More of each and at various times and locations will need to be provided to include more of our EC family in the ongoing conversation.
- We acknowledge that our community overlaps the other EC communities, as well as many resource agencies outside our faith family. We must become masters of referring pastors, church leadership teams and churches when appropriate.

Imagining So Much More

KINGDOM is bigger than Church and much, much bigger than my church. For some of us, we cannot imagine that big. That is why we need to come together! At least once-in-a-while. When we’re together – to learn, to serve, to worship – we immediately see bigger. Seeing bigger helps us to imagine even bigger. And we need to imagine bigger to venture beyond what we know, what we recognize as safe. Kingdom ministry is not always safe, but it is always exactly where God is already at work.

- God is at work in our neighbors lives. We just need to get close enough to see what he’s doing. This begins when we say, “hello,” and continues as we deepen relationships.
- God is at work where we work, study or play. We just need to slow down enough to engage those around us in new ways.
- God is at work everywhere we might go. We just need to learn to “see people” as God sees people. Not projects, but people just like you and me.

When we begin to add these behaviors to our daily lives, suddenly we become aware of how big God’s influence is, as well as recognize the length and width and height of the KINGDOM and its influence on our world. The KEC is eager to walk with you as you imagine more. We are equipped to help you discover your ministry context.

Doing New Things

The Kingdom Extension Community is not just about conversation and new ways of thinking. We are also all about doing new things, launching new ministries. Conversations lead to thinking. Thinking leads to imagining. Imagining leads to planning and doing. We are prepared to walk beside you through each of these phases of Kingdom engagement.

- We will listen. And ask questions. Everyone, even a church leadership team, needs someone to listen and ask good questions.

- We will help you process ministry models (there are many), identify opportunities and obstacles, and develop your first step or next steps.
- We will walk with you as you identify potential partners for the journey. Some ministry opportunities are best attempted with others. Learning and serving cohorts might travel together toward new ministry opportunities.
- We will help you assess and plan for financial needs for new missional ministries. New ministries cost more than a paycheck. Sometimes, a paycheck is the last expense added.

Church Planting Initiatives

While our youngest church planting initiatives are nearly two years old (Christ House, Lancaster – Tim King; Next Step, York – Tim King & Carlos Kelly; LAUNCH, Sinking Spring – Matt Hill), we continue to monitor the health of all our planters, their families and ongoing ministries. Longevity in ministry is more likely with good pastoral care, which is being provided by our KEA and District Field Directors.

Tentative conversations have begun between the KEA and several pastors and/or leadership teams regarding potential new works – outreaches, possible plants and mergers. Please pray with us as we consider new works, entertain potential partnerships, and think through alternate ministry models. Pray with us as we encourage pastors and churches to rethink the discipleship process for their congregations as they seek to establish community connections, missional engagement and new ministries.

For the privilege and opportunity to serve our Lord, our churches, and our planters, we thank you. May you experience the power of His presence in your daily lives.

Rev. Les Cool

for the Kingdom Extension Community

Current Kingdom Projects

(CAPS SIGNIFY SOME FORM OF CURRENT BUDGET/FINANCIAL SUPPORT)

- **5 Planters and 6 Plants**
 - Ephrata, PA . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
 - LANCASTER, PA . . . CHRIST HOUSE CHURCH (TIM KING)
 - Lehigh Valley, PA . . . Horizon (Bud Daneker)
 - Pottstown area, PA . . . Journey53 (Rick Christman)
 - York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)
 - YORK PA . . . THE NEXT STEP (CARLOS KELLY & TIM KING)
- **2 Restarts / Revitalizations**
 - Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)
 - TALLMADGE, OH . . . NEW DIRECTION (TIM REAM)
- **2 Informal Partnerships* / 5 Missional Works / 0 Potential Adoptions**
 - Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
 - 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)
 - "Red Plate" and "Canal Street"
 - SINKING SPRING, PA . . . FRESH EXPRESSION LAUNCHES (MATT HILL – PASTOR OF MISSIONAL MINISTRIES)

*An "informal partnership" is 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 the

ministry of one of our men, the use of building space, or overlapping ministry events or conversations regarding future partnerships. These partnerships may become more formal or will dissolve when appropriate.

Philosophy of Ministry

The KEC continues to embrace the following three biblically-based principles adapted by the CPC as helpful guidelines for launching ministries designed to obey the Great Commission.

- **The Church is the people called by God to his mission.** As the church we are a people redeemed through Jesus Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit to live in community as witness to God's love and intention for humanity and the whole created order. The church's work is accomplished as we receive God's blessing and bless the world around us in the name of Jesus and in the power of his Holy Spirit. (from "The Church" adopted by the 2014 National Conference)
- **Church planting is the intentional, relational and redemptive work** of the people of the church in identified communities or to identified people groups to the end that a new church (gathering of God's people for church related ministries) is the fruit. (CPC working definition for church planting)
- **A Fresh Expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of any church.**
 - Fresh expressions are missional (serving those not currently served by any church); incarnational (listening to people and entering their culture); discipling (helping people enter more fully into the life of Christ); and ecclesial (forming church). Fresh Expressions work towards establishing a new community or congregation especially for those who have never been involved in church (un-churched) or people who once were part of a church, but left for whatever reason (de-churched). While a fresh expression of church might look different from the structure of a more established church, they are best conceived and orchestrated in partnership with established churches. (from the Fresh Expressions website)