

partners

THE KINGDOM EXTENSION NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

“Asociacion Vive”

A message from a missional expression in the heart of Spain.

By Ron Anderson

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON to read in a bulletin of urgent and specific needs: i.e., four Sunday school teachers for the fall, two people to serve at a dinner, three new greeters, five people to help with VBS. All are great ways to serve but in many cases require serving in programs that fulfill someone else's vision. This is not motivating to many.

I believe a reason Christian people are not more “missional”

is the entangled bureaucracy of well-meaning church policies and programs and resulting feelings of inadequacy. Wouldn't it be great to give each person freedom to develop their missional calling in an entrepreneurial way? Christians

could use their own mix of gifts and personality as opposed to fitting into an established role.

With this idea in mind, several of us rented a storefront in Alcala de Henares, Spain. The requirements to serve or lead a ministry here



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were limited to a set of basic values. We also reduced hang-ups that tend to stop non-Christians joining activities. The outcome? A safer place to be missional for both Christians and seekers, a place full of "positive energy" (the Holy Spirit) as friendships are made by both Christians and non-Christians, and an oasis from the post-Christian, secular mindset that permeates life in Spain.

The place is marked with a simple sign that reads: "**Asociacion Vive.**" Its legal structure is that of a "social association" and not a church. Front windows are covered with well-designed flyers advertising English classes, aerobics, scrapbooking, social groups. While each is independent of the others, all have the same endgame: moving people closer to Jesus (discipleship).

Many who attend Vive events do not yet know Jesus, including Muslim women who joined a weekly aerobic class. They are attracted to this activity since no men are allowed, and during cool down may hear a Bible story or receive an invitation to tea. Through it all, they see Christ incarnated in the two Christian ladies who initiated and coordinate the activity.

Here are some nuts and bolts of how Vive relates to the Body of Christ. All "shareholders" (those who pay rent and keep the calendar



of events for Vive) are members in good standing of the Camarma Christian Community Church. Though we are involved in official ministries of the church, we noticed limitations in our ability to be among the unchurched. We noticed some Christians wanted to serve the Lord in other ways than what our church was offering. We decided to try something new.

Once the local church saw Vive was working towards the same goal and not competing against the church, a relationship began to grow between the two. The leadership and the members of Camarma now see Vive as a great asset.

Last Sunday, two Christian friends came to our home after church. Carlos is an elder of the local church and I wondered how he viewed his wife, Miram, being

part of a scrap-booking ministry at Vive. When I asked Miriam about her participation, she said with tears in her eyes, "Vive has given me an opportunity to minister in a way that fits me."

Miram has been a Christian for some 35 years and she has never felt this freedom in expressing what God has equipped her to do. I looked at Carlos wondering what he, a representative of the "traditional church," would say. His eyes and smile said it all: the concept of Vive helped unlock Miriam to fulfill her God-given desire of being actively missional.

Having a solid base of healthy relationships (not structure) and a developing a clear vision are two fundamental ingredients necessary before launching a missional experiment. I encourage you to go and "Vive" for Jesus and his Kingdom. ■



Ron Anderson serves with European Christian Mission International (ECMI) in Madrid, Spain, where he and his wife Brenda have been involved in church planting for over three decades. Formerly the ECMI European Director for Field Ministries, Ron now serves as European Church Planting Consultant and is Senior Catalyst for the Church Planting issue network for the Lausanne Movement.

IDEA: Look for the Mission Field in Your Back Yard

Craig and Jody Stine, who attend Bethesda EC Church in Reedsville, Pa., have found a great way to connect with the thousands of people who pass through a local stretch of the Appalachian trail each year. The Stine's property is less than two miles from the trail, and the couple decided to open a hostel when Craig retired from the State Police last January.

The trail is quiet right now, Stine notes, but foot traffic is expected to pick up from April to November. Stine suggested at a Ministry Council meeting in February that Bethesda set up a helpbox and shuttle service for hikers. Plans are underway for this outreach: a cooler will be set up on a trail head and stocked with water bottles and granola bars. Info will be posted on Bethesda and offering hikers rides to the church (on Sunday) or into town for supplies. A hot meal is also an option for them.

It costs up to \$4,000 to travel the Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Georgia to Maine and covers about 2,200 miles and 5 million steps. Most hikers require six to nine months to complete the full trail and will literally walk through the soles of 4 pairs of hiking shoes. The stone-strewn stretch



Travelers on the Appalachian Trail can only carry so much on their pack, and many are eager for a fresh, hot meal. Craig Stine, who meets through-hikers via a hostel, said any church group could head out to a trail head on a weekend afternoon and offer grilled burgers to hikers they meet.



This group of hikers traveled from Michigan to take a 55-mile journey on the Appalachian Trail this fall. They are among an estimated two thousand hikers who travel the trail near Reedsville, Pa., each year; hikers are often eager for a hot meal, a dry bed and a chance to connect with people they meet on the journey.

in Pennsylvania has earned the state the name "Rocksylvania" and can be particularly rough on hikers.

"The people can be smelly, they haven't showered for weeks, need their laundry done and are eager for a hot meal," Stine says. "But they're nice

people, they usually have a story to tell."

He's met people from Germany, France, China and Iraq, to name a few. Some are walking to celebrate recovering from an illness, others are recently retired from the military or business

world. Some are taking a break after finishing college. And a few have come to church at Reedsville if the timing falls on a non hiking day.

"If they take their 'zero' on a Sunday, church is a nice option," Stine says. ■



This "Old Hiker" is making his way to the trail head in Port Clinton, Pa. He connected with Craig and Jody Stine, who run Rock'n Sole, an Appalachian Trail hostel, and are looking for ways to connect with hikers as an outreach of Bethesda EC Church in Reedsville, Pa.

IDEA: Take Your Church To The Community

What started out as a spontaneous idea has grown into an intentional connection between the members of Salem EC Church, Lenhartsville, Pa. and the residents of Wyndcliffe House Apartments in neighboring Hamburg, Pa.

It began in the fall of 2015. The church was wrapping up its annual pig roast, welcoming 800 or so guests to the church property. When packaging leftover food, someone suggested taking some containers to Wyndcliffe. The subsidized apartments are home to about 100 individuals, many of whom are seniors and all managing on fixed incomes. Most of them also live alone.

Pastor David Long gathered a few volunteers and they began knocking on doors, offering meals.

The neighborly act was well received, and the church made plans to return.

Salem members have since served hot, homestyle meals three times at Wyndcliffe's community room. Long coordinates a date with the apartment manager and posts flyers to advertise. Some church members donate food, others prepare it, and still others serve it to the residents. Then they fill their own plates and sit down with their neighbors.

"Most people think you're going there to bless or serve those who may need additional help, but I know I always get a real blessing being there, talking and sitting and laughing with the folks," Deb Pirkey, a church member, explained. "Instead of having people come to the church, the church goes to them."

Salem also returned to the apartments after their 2016 pig roast, this time factoring in extra meals to take over. And at Christmas time, church members went caroling at Wyndcliffe. They broke into groups and strolled the hallways of the units, singing favorite tunes. Residents opened their doors, some joining in the singing, others shaking hands and offering hugs of welcome.

A few residents attend services at Salem. Long hopes to continue building relationships with the apartment community and to offer rides between Wyndcliffe and Salem in the church vans.

"I think it's a great opportunity to meet a need in our community," Long concluded. "We are showing Christ-like love to our neighbors in a very tangible way." ■

PRAYING FOR CHURCH PLANTING Day of Prayer for Church Planting, the first Sunday of each month

PLEASE PRAY FOR . . .

- Each planter and plant by name – seeking God's blessings.
- Our planting families – that God meets their needs.
- Planting leadership teams – that they work together around God's redemptive mission.
- Planting communities – that relationships might be developed.
- Ministry structures – that Jesus and His Kingdom are priorities.

CURRENT PROJECTS:

7 Planters and 8 Plants

- Ephrata, Pa . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
- Lancaster, Pa . . . Christ House Church (Tim King)
- 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)

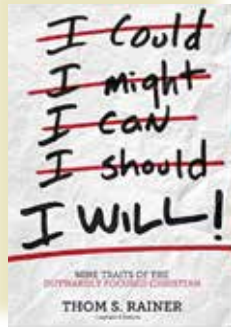
RESOURCE CENTER

I Will: Nine Traits of the Outwardly Focused Christian by Thom S. Rainer

Every day we are faced with the needs of those around us. Emotional. Physical. Spiritual. What are we to do about it? Are these problems for our pastors to address or is there a way for the church member to make an impact that will last?

Rainer challenges us to do more than think about ourselves and our own church. If we are indeed in love with Jesus (the Jesus of the Bible) and His Church (not our church), then we will think of others. Maybe we can learn to think of others first, especially since we naturally think of ourselves.

Get a copy. Read it, and pass it along to a friend. ■



God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally by Doug Pollock

Very few believers do not want to help others learn about Jesus. But way too many believers have no clue how to make it happen. Some just don't know what to say. Others never seem to find the right moment to speak.

Pollock uses stories to help us imagine the bridges we might make use of to place the gospel before the lost people in our lives. An everyday conversation can become a moment of witness. That brief moment at work or play, across the back yard fence, could be a moment of witness.

Be brave. Give this book a read. Read it with a few other struggling and frustrated witnesses. Become the voice you were saved to be. ■

