

partners

THE KINGDOM EXTENSION NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

KINGDOM OBEDIENCE Don't count the numbers; recount the stories

Major Karl Noel Blancaflor, an ordained minister in the E.C. Church, was serving in the U.S. Air Force as deputy wing chaplain at Barksdale Air Force Base (Bossier City, La.) when his boss asked him to plant a church in a 1,000-apartment housing complex.

They found a community center in the neighborhood that was not used on Sunday morning. The single room had a maximum capacity of only 42 people. That meant there was no space for childcare. If it was nice out, the adults met on the patio and the kids were inside. Otherwise they all stayed inside, and they were "the church family with crying kids or kids who made noise," said Noel. "We welcomed it, recognizing that parents may not know church etiquette to take kids out."

Information went out through email networks and word of mouth in advance of the opening service on April 10, 2016. They brought in two ice cream trucks and gave out free ice cream with an invite to church. They had no musician until the day before when Noel met a new believer who played the guitar.

FOCUS ON LIFE STORIES

"If we were focused on the numbers, I would have completely missed what the gospel is about," said Noel. "Looking at the numbers and the manpower needed, it seemed logical to stop it. But whenever I thought that, something would happen where God appeared to be saying, 'I dare you to do it!'"

- One Sunday they hosted a baptism in the community pool while those swimming witnessed a baptism without ever stepping into a church.
- An eight-year-old could come to church alone because he could ride his bike the half-mile.
- The five-year-old daughter of a single mom came each with week five lollipops, serving as the "hospitality coordinator."
- A mom wheeled her handicapped child down the sidewalk to church. "I'm so grateful you are here," she said. "It's such a chore usually to go to church. Many churches are not welcoming to a child in a wheelchair."

"God's hand was definitely present," said Noel, "and it was refreshing."

A year later, Noel was transferred to Presidio of Monterey in California. "For a season while we were there, it's what we were supposed to do," said Noel. "People were discipled, learned to serve using their talents and gifts, and now are all over the world being the church." ■

Interested in planting a church? Noel's advice:

- **Don't rely on your own understanding or on what you're used to.** It will look different; go with it.
- **Recognize that you can't do it by yourself.** Noel needed his family and others who to serve with him.
- **Capitalize on the strengths of the people God brings to you.** For this church it included their new musician, a friendly child, and a woman trained in Precept ministries to do discipleship.
- **Celebrate what God has done!**

KINGDOM NEIGHBORHOODS Connecting with your neighborhood for long-term impact

Investing in community relationships is the focus of Ebenezer E. C. Church (Jim Thorpe, Pa.). "If a church is closed off to its own community," said pastor Nathan Kennedy, "it becomes a club. And clubs die."

Nathan and the members of Ebenezer are involved in community basketball, a prison service, and prayer-walking their town to develop relationships.

FEEDING THE COMMUNITY

In addition, a monthly food pantry serves 80 families. The 10-year old ministry is coordinated by a church member and staffed by volunteers. Groceries are ordered at a deep discount and delivered to the church. Volunteers from Ebenezer, other churches, and the neighborhood stock shelves in a Sunday school room, four freezers, and refrigerators. It cramps the space a bit, but as Nathan put it, "if the building is more important to me than the needs of the community, that's sad." Groceries are purchased as needed to supplement the variety.

The day before pantry day, volunteers move the nonperishable food onto tables. This allows the recipients to shop the tables as they would a grocery store. They can select what their family will eat. For instance, if a family enjoys rice but not pasta, they can choose the one they prefer.

Three to four meats are given out, plus eggs and peanut butter for protein. Rice, cereal, soup, vegetables, pasta, and sauce are all available, supplemented by various community donations.

Some government money exists to purchase groceries. Supermarkets have made donations, and the local grocery store has a bin where people can donate food items. The Boy Scouts, Girl

Scouts, high school, and churches have donated cash or groceries.

STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

The church's community connections have brought in donations as well. While out prayer walking, Nathan was handed a \$100 bill by a guy who appreciates what the church does. Another community member secured them a grant from a foundation he was part of.

One gentleman came to the pantry after a job loss. He volunteered to assist in the food deliveries made to 8–10 shut-ins each month. When he found a job, he stopped back to thank the church. "You have no idea how much this food pantry helped us," he said.

"The food pantry has given us a good reputation because people know we serve anyone who comes to our door; we meet a genuine need in our community," said Nathan. Volunteers build relationships with those who come each month. "It's a gateway to our community," said Nathan. "People are actually coming into the church and seeing a friendly face of someone who cares about their community. It enables us to build conversations about other areas of our lives. And hopefully they get to know Jesus through our conversation."

One recipient told Nathan that he suggested his neighbors bring their kids to Ebenezer's VBS. The family came, referred by someone who doesn't even attend the church!

A young man whose family has been served by the food pantry wanted to help the church through his Eagle Scout project. The Boy

Scouts have given him approval to replace the church's retaining wall. "We would never have known him if not for the food pantry," said Nathan. "But now God is blessing us through this relationship."

"The word Ebenezer means 'stone of help,' said Nathan, "and that's what we want to be to our neighborhood, standing on Jesus Christ, our cornerstone and helper." ■

Want to do more to impact your community? Nathan suggests:

- **Get out in the neighborhood.** Prayer-walk. Participate in community activities. Engage in conversation.
- **Look at current community needs.** Don't replicate what others are doing (for instance, Ebenezer refers to another church that offers a clothing closet).
- **Examine the gifts and graces of your congregation and ask how they can be used to meet the need.** What skills and interests do your people have? What space in your building could be utilized for this?
- **Commit to the long term.** Relationships take a long time to build. Earn the right to be heard in the neighborhood—keep showing up!
- **Love and serve like Jesus.** You can't force people to love Jesus, but they can see Jesus in your actions.

If you have questions or want advice on food pantries or ministering to your neighborhood, Nathan Kennedy is eager to talk with you: 570-325-2548 wcidfc@yahoo.com

KINGDOM INVESTMENT

Discovering the value of college ministry

Grace Church in Kutztown, Pa., sits half a block from Kutztown University and has long been a place for college students to call home. In the last three years, the church has seen its ministry to these students multiply beyond expectations.

Lead pastor Adam Roberts said students began showing up at Grace because of the church's food bank. When family pastor Paul Mannino joined the staff, it made sense for the church to become more intentional in its ministry to college students. Paul's official role at the church was to oversee preschool through high school ministries but based on his experience in college, he saw the value of including college students in the life of the church.

"If you give them something meaningful to do, they get involved," Paul said. "I thought that if we could get an injection of college students that could really change the church."

But it didn't just happen. It took effort on the part of the people and staff of Grace Church.

SURVEYS AND FREE COFFEE

At the beginning of the school year when students are moving into the dorms, Grace Church volunteers help unload cars and carry boxes and suitcases into the residences. And when the university hosts community groups to introduce their services to the students, Grace Church participates by offering free Rita's Italian Ice and asking students to complete a three-question survey:

- Would you like more information about the church?
- Would you be open to having a free coffee with one of the staff?
- Would you like to help with the food pantry?

This year, the church made 104 contacts with students through the surveys and "more than half said they wanted to get coffee," Paul said. "They were not necessarily interested in church, but they wanted coffee."

THEY ARE THE CHURCH

This invitation to connect and participate has been key to the growing college population at Grace Church.

"They are not part of Grace Church, they *are* Grace Church," Adam said, citing student involvement in worship and welcome teams, childcare for mothers' groups, the food pantry, the children's ministry, and on church commissions. "They have literally become part of everything we do."

Grace Church as a whole has come to believe college students are worth the investment because of the potential impact on God's kingdom, not just on their church specifically.

"We build into these students for four years," Paul said, "and we have no idea the impact those four years have on them. That's the exciting part. Eighty to ninety percent of them go

off and we have no idea what story God is going to write in their lives and the part we might play in that. That's a win for God's kingdom."

While the church is available to students after they graduate, Adam and Paul said their goal is not to become long-distance pastors to the students nor to replace a college ministry experience.

"We'll have done our job if we have taught them how to be part of a local church so when they go wherever they go, they can be active participants and, we hope, care about college students," Paul said. "I can't be Obi-Wan from 500 miles away. With adolescence expanding and the rise of emerging adulthood, we want our students to know that their best bet is to get plugged in to a local church."

And not all of them leave. Adam said the church has members in their 50s and 60s who once were college students at Kutztown.

MAKING SPACE FOR COMMUNITY

Being half a block from campus makes this outreach a natural fit but doesn't guarantee an influx of college students, Paul said.

"Sometimes people will say, 'Well, that's easy. You're right there.' A lot of churches have the college 'right there,'" he said. "We're giving them a place to be known and to serve. We treat college students like they have something to offer." ■

Interested in investing in a specific group of people in your community? Some tips to keep in mind:

- **Aim for invitation.** "You don't have to be cool and trendy to attract college students," Adam said. "We're not flashy or hip. We're warm and inviting."
- **Seek input from the people you want to reach.** Adam said the structure for their college ministry emerged from conversations with the first students who showed up at Grace Church.
- **Provide a place of belonging and encourage involvement in the life of the church.**
- **Consider whether the kingdom impact might be greater than the local impact.**



KINGDOM INVESTMENT

*Discovering the value of college ministry
Grace Church (Kutztown, PA)*



KINGDOM NEIGHBORHOODS

*Connecting with your neighborhood for long-term impact
Ebenezer E. C. Church
(Jim Thorpe, PA)*



KINGDOM PARTNERSHIPS

*Churches join forces to host VBS event
Mohn's Hill E.C. Church
(near Reading, PA)*

KINGDOM PARTNERSHIPS

Churches join forces to host VBS event

When Mohn's Hill E.C. Church (near Reading, Pa.) decided to take its VBS off-site, they soon discovered their need for a new location. And in searching for a new location, they also found a partnership.

Now, Mohn's Hill, Immanuel E.C. (Adamstown, Pa.), and Gehman Mennonite Church (Reinholds, Pa.) come together every summer to host a weeklong event called Backyard Kids Club, said Mohn's Hill Children's Director April Matz.

BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES

Any partnership between people and organizations is bound to have positive and negative aspects, and a VBS partnership is no different. Among the benefits is the sharing of resources.

"Logistically, you have more help with volunteers and finances," April said. There are also more connections that can lead to donations—in this case, use of a park pavilion at no cost and tents. Increased publicity for the event is another positive.

"I think it's neat for the community," April said. "We're making a statement to the community and I think it speaks volumes that we can come together and you can't tell who is from what church. It's neat to be the hands of Christ together."

Relationships between members of the three churches have grown as a

result of this shared outreach. One of the ways they have nurtured those relationships is to create community among the volunteers during the VBS with a shared meal on the first night of the VBS.

"I personally didn't know anybody from either of those churches before," April said. "There's a sister church feel to it."

Challenges of a VBS partnership include communication and planning, as well as personality differences and balancing costs equitably. April said they try to limit the number of planning meetings and communicate mostly by e-mail.

SHARING IDEAS

Even if your church isn't collaborating with another church for an event, April encourages networking between congregations. When word got out that Mohn's Hill had their VBS off site, another church in the EC family contacted April to talk about what that looks like.

"Think outside the box, bounce ideas off each other, and share resources," she said.

If a church is interested in moving VBS to a different location, make sure it's safe and as close to weather-proof as possible. Being respectful of other churches and their VBS schedules

is another way to build community, April said. Mohn's Hill invited another church to join them, and when the church declined, they made sure to schedule their event at a different time than that church's VBS.

And if churches from the community do decide to partner on a VBS, creating time for the volunteers to get to know each other outside of the event itself is important, April said. ■

Interested in partnering with another church for VBS? Ask questions like:

- How will we share costs?
- What resources does each group have already?
- Who will lead the planning, communicating, and scheduling?
- How many meetings will we schedule?
- How will we communicate between meetings?
- Who else should we invite to join us?
- What is the best time of year and location for the event?

Contact April Matz at Mohn's Hill Church to further discuss these issues: april@mohnshill.org; (610) 775-3667

Changes on the Partners staff: Thank you to Kolleen Long for many years of faithful service as the CPC and KEC Partners editor, and welcome to Lisa Bartelt and Carol Cool, the new editors. Blessings to you, Kolleen, as you take on new roles and responsibilities. Lisa and Carol, we anticipate what you will share with us over the next many issues of Partners.



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100 WEST PARK AVE, MYERSTOWN PA 17067 • 717-866-7581
eccenter@eccenter.com • www.eccenter.com

KINGDOM EXTENSION COMMUNITY MEMBERS: Rev. Leslie Cool, Associate & Chair; Bishop Rev. Bruce Hill; Rev. Ron Anderson; Mr. Andrew Brubaker; 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.

Kingdom Extension Community

RESOURCES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

Big Idea Resources . . . is offering two free “all church” programs – Starting Over and Finding Your Way Back, including sermons, lessons, graphics, etc. (Check them out at <http://bigidearesources.com/>) If nothing else, you might be inspired to think about new ideas. While there, take a look at Big Idea.

Exponential Publications . . . check out and download Bobby Harrington’s new book, *Becoming a Disciple Maker* (<https://exponential.org/resource-ebooks/>). While you’re at the site, check out the many other books that have been sponsored (for free!) by Exponential.

New Small Church . . . is a website dedicated to “encouraging, connecting & equipping innovative small church leaders.” (Find it at . . . <http://newsmallchurch.com/start-here/read-these-first/>) There is something for everyone, even stuff we might not need or want . . . today. Maybe tomorrow. ■

TRAINING FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

Peers in Ministry,

We know that discipleship is fundamental to healthy spiritual lives, for our own lives, as well as for the lives of those we seek to influence for Jesus. We also know that discipleship doesn't just happen. You need a plan. Do you have a plan? Is your plan working?

There may be many models for doing discipleship. But there are only a few basic elements of effective discipleship. 3DM has mastered the art of discipling, focusing mission, and training others to do the same.

3DM Discipleship and Mission Workshops are being held throughout the year in or around our area, as well as around the country. You can look for these events or find more information at: <https://3dmovements.com/workshops/> OR by contacting Al Giles (610-389-5857 or pastoral@ptd.net)

During these two-day events, you will:

- Explore the dynamics of making disciples of Jesus who can join God in his mission.
- Discover the principles of going from having a ministry to leading a movement: reproducing disciples instead of just recruiting more volunteers, multiplying communities instead of just adding more people.

A 3DM Discipleship and Mission workshop is a chance to taste and experience:

- Teaching that will help frame discipleship and mission in a new light.
- Training with your team to help you apply principles contextually.
- Effective vehicles for discipleship and mission, such as huddles and missional communities.
- What it's like to be part of a 3DM Learning Community (two-year journey of culture change).

We will be sure to keep you posted when nearby dates are added to the schedule. Les Cool for the Kingdom Extension Community / (717) 951-8433 ■

Praying for Church Planting

PLEASE PRAY FOR . . .

- God’s blessing on our planters and their families – health, stamina, joy on the journey.
- God’s protection – as busyness can be harmful.
- God’s leading as they seek to develop relationships for the Kingdom.
- God’s wisdom as they disciple and develop leaders and leadership teams.
- God’s vision as they enter and engage new communities.

CURRENT PROJECTS:

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 / Revitalization

- Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)
- Tallmadge, OH . . . New Direction (Tim Ream)

3 Informal Partnerships* / 2 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, 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.