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THE CHURCH PLANTING NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

Church Planting Perspectives

THREE MEN SHARE MEMORIES OF THEIR ROLES IN THE
START UP OF WYNDEMERE HEIGHTS EC CHURCH

by Kolleen Long

Bill Kautz

PAST CPC MEMBER

Kautz and his wife, Gladys, played a key role in starting the church plant that would become Wyndemere Heights. Kautz, who was active in a neighboring EC church at the time, attended a denominational planning meeting at the request of his church board president. As discussions arose around the need to start a new congregation, Kautz mentioned the West Shore area.

He admits that becoming active in this proposed new church “was the last thing on my mind. Making the suggestion and actually doing it was a very different thing. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit was with us and we did it. And it was a good thing.”

The Kautzes opened their own home, in fact, for early church meetings led by Dick and Mary Kohl. The new congregation moved

to a local motel and, by the mid-80s, work began on a permanent structure. The church plant became Wyndemere Heights EC Church, and Bill and Gladys Kautz are still members today.

Kautz served as part of the denomination’s Church Planting Committee, and later the Church Planting Commission, for over a decade. He and his wife drew on their experiences as lay leaders in a successful church plant as they worked alongside other CPC members. Now 80, Kautz stepped down about a year ago in order to let younger leaders take up the cause of church planting.

“One of the things I’ve learned over the years is that each one of



Gladys and Bill Kautz (above) were among the founding members of Wyndemere Heights EC Church. The couple hosted early meetings for this church plant in their home in the early 1980s, were active in the building phase and remain members of the established congregation today.

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these [church planting] situations are different," Kautz says. "Personalities are different. The willingness of people to work with you is different. Where you are physically is different."

In order to better assess and prepare church planters, he says, the denomination began sending potential pastors and their wives to church-planting "boot camps" to expose them to the tough work ahead of them. "We wanted to be sure that the investment was a good one, that the people were committed," he says.

"We've had a very successful run, as the EC church, of building churches," continues Kautz, "and I think it can continue in the future." He cautions that continued success will only happen by successfully incorporating the next generation of leaders, especially those with the capability to bridge multiple generations.

"We need to find out how to get the gospel message to young people and get them involved," Kautz explains. "I think this is the major issue facing every Christian church worldwide, how to get our young people involved. I don't know of anything more critical."

Richard Kohl

BISHOP EMERITUS

When Richard Kohl prepared to leave the army after 21 years as a chaplain, he and his wife, Mary, prayed about how they could best serve in the ministry. The opportunity to pastor a new EC church plant near Harrisburg was the answer to their prayers.

It was just one way, Kohl recalls, that God provided what was needed at the right time. The church needed a place to meet, for example, that would be easy to find and had ample parking. Kohl talked to Al Leo, the owner of a local motel, and Leo offered meeting

space in the motel if attendees ate breakfast in the dining room. "So," Kohl says, "we fed the people breakfast for about seven years."

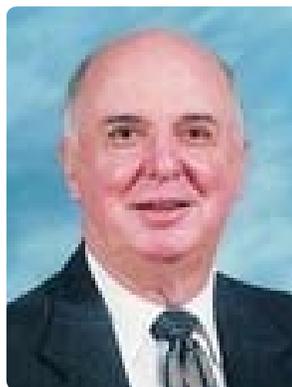
By that time, the congregation was ready for a more permanent meeting space. Again, Kohl says, he sought God's help.

"The way God worked was a miracle," he recalls. "I was praying for someone, I didn't care who, to somehow donate \$100,000 so we didn't have to go so far in debt." Kohl admits he was hoping a check would simply appear in his mailbox, but God choose to meet this need in a different way, through a professional home-builder who felt called by the Lord to commit a year of his time to different churches and help them build.

Church leaders met with this man, and they entered into a yearlong commitment. They put a trailer on the church property and the man lived there with his son for that time, putting in five days a week on the project. The congregation pitched in as well.

"We worked there as a group of people Tuesday and Thursday nights and on Saturdays," Kohl says. "On Saturdays, the elderly and those who couldn't do the physical chores provided the morning doughnuts and the noon lunch. We just had a wonderful time,"

In all, Kohl estimates, 45 people were involved in the project on a regular basis and the congregation did 90% of the actual labor. In addition, members from neighboring EC churches volunteered their services. And in the end, the congregation had a new, 15,000-square-foot building, valued at \$750,000, for a cost of just \$300,000.



Richard Kohl

"We developed a motto, 'The miracle goes on.' Something positive was the driving influence for the people of the church," he says. "It was such a wonderful experience [building that church] and I don't mean the structure, I mean the people. The people built that church

by bringing other people that they knew were struggling in life."

Kohl pastored Wyndemere Heights for over a decade before he was elected bishop in 1991. He looks back fondly on his time as a church planter and offers today's planters the following advice: "Preach the Gospel. Love People. And those two ingredients will build a church."

Today, Richard and Mary Kohl have retired to South Carolina, where they live near their daughter and her growing family. And together, they all attend yet another church plant. Kohl strives to be a sounding board for that church's pastor. And, he admits, "now, instead of doing the planning, I can sit back and be blessed."

John Moyer

BISHOP EMERITUS

John Moyer clearly recalls the start of the Wyndemere congregation:

"I still remember when we got the word from some folks in Clarks Valley that there was a need for a church on the West Shore [near Harrisburg]," he says. Moyer met with future-Bishop Dick Kohl, currently a chaplain in the area, as well as Dave Greulich and William and Gladys Kautz. Kohl "jumped at the opportunity," Moyer recalls. "It wasn't long before a group was meeting in a hotel there. Within hardly

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DID YOU KNOW:

Church Planting Is An International EC Effort?

Absolutely! Just ask Randy Sizemore, director of Global Ministries for the EC Church. The idea of churches planting churches is ideal overseas, he says, because it follows the most effective form of evangelism when someone shares the gospel with someone else in the same people group or culture.

"God's Plan A for reaching the world is through the local church," Sizemore says. "There is no other way that God is going to reach the world. That's his chosen method. So planting local churches is how we fulfill the Great Commission."

Training indigenous leaders is the key for international church planting. "They live there," Sizemore notes. "They speak the language, they know the culture."

In addition, indigenous leaders make the most sense financially. "You get a bigger bang for your buck, so to speak," he says. "They live on hardly anything. That's how the people they minister to live. That's how everyone lives."

Of course, potential church planters are not always available in the culture that needs them. "The next best thing is when someone shares Jesus with a sister group," Sizemore says. "They share a common language, maybe different dialects, but they look the same."

In northeast India, for example, international EC churches send out church planters to neighboring countries where there is no evangelical presence. These missionaries are working in 4 countries among 12 people groups using 20 languages and combating five other major religions.

A third evangelism model is cross-cultural missions, or what many think of as traditional western missions work. "Someone from one people group is sharing Jesus with a totally different people group," Sizemore explains. "That's the least effective form of evangelism and church planting. There are so many hurdles."

Out of the 57 Evangelical Congregational mission workers across the globe, eight are involved in church planting in foreign countries such as Spain and India. Not all of these are EC churches per se, Sizemore notes, with many projects the combined effort of workers representing several different denominations or groups. "We have this kingdom mindset," he says, with the idea to "plant churches that are run and administrated by the national people."

NOTE: *The Spring 2010 issue of Partners will introduce several of the men and women working as church planters around the globe.*



Randy Sizemore

*“Great
Commission
people are
church
planters
– here,
there
and
every-
where.”*

- Randy Sizemore



anytime at all, a nice size of group began meeting on Sunday.”

“It became a very nice sized church in not too long a time,” Moyer says. “They soon were ready to build.”

During his tenure as bishop from 1979 to 1987, Moyer was able to work with a number of other church planting efforts. He notes that Dick Cattermole, who served as administrative secretary, did much to advance the plant in the West Shore and other areas.

“Church planting has always been on the growing edge of the denomination,” Moyer says. “We believed then

and we still believe it’s the most effective strategy for evangelism. It really received our attention and emphasis through those years.”

That emphasis continues to the present day, he adds. “I think we all recognize this is where we as a denomination are going to expand, by starting new churches. The emphasis that is gradually developing since [Mike] Sigman was bishop is that churches should plant churches.”

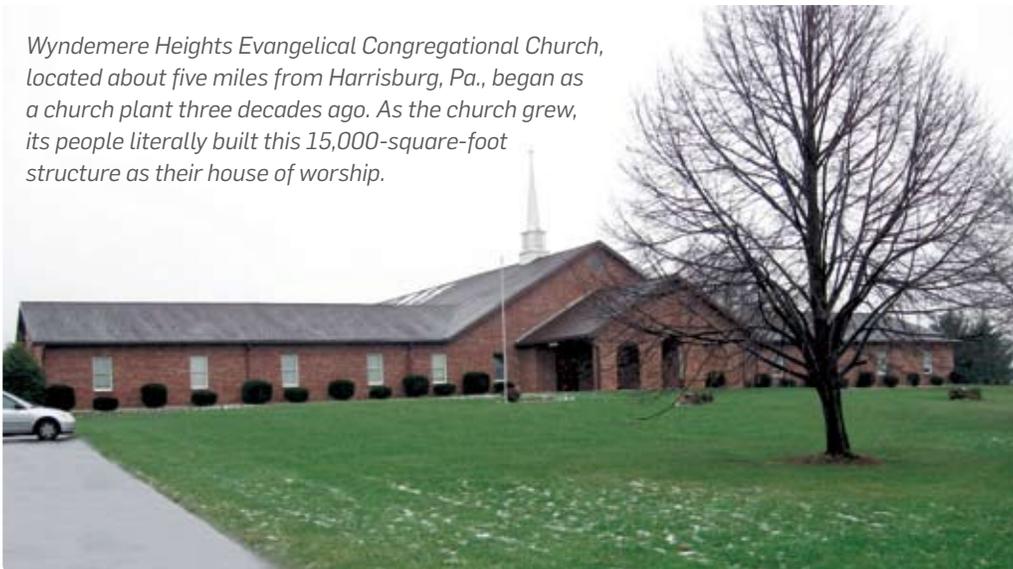


John Moyer

concept of church planting was part of the denomination in the early 20th century. “We are returning to it now.”

While the denomination takes a necessary supervisory role, Moyer says, individual churches are crucial in the process. When a congregation is strong, it can send out a core of people to start a new work. Moyer notes that this

Wyndemere Heights Evangelical Congregational Church, located about five miles from Harrisburg, Pa., began as a church plant three decades ago. As the church grew, its people literally built this 15,000-square-foot structure as their house of worship.



The **PURPOSE** of the Church Planting Commission of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to know Christ and make Him known.

The **MISSION** of the Church Planting Commission of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to help churches plant healthy churches that proclaim Christ to a hurting world.

The **VISION** of the Church Planting Commission is that the Evangelical Congregational Church becomes a Church Multiplication movement, realized when churches plant healthy churches that plant healthy churches.

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A PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH PLANTING COMMISSION
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