

# partners

THE CHURCH PLANTING NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

## Building the Kingdom by Building a Ramp

**T**o me, ministry is just ministry," Brian Kern, pastor of Trinity EC Church, a restart in Slatington, Pa., says. "It's service and serving the Lord, first of all, and serving people as an outgrowth of serving him."

Kern has seen this service in the shape of assisting a pastor in his district whose wife was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Fellow pastors took an offering to help with medical bills and also provided

tangible help in form of a ramp to the house. A man in Kern's congregation built the ramp to allow the wife to bypass the existing, steep steps to her front door.

"And he went and built this absolutely fantastic, elaborate ramp system for them," Kern says. "It's a marvel to behold."

Kern's church provided similar practical assistance to a neighborhood woman when her car engine failed. While they were unable

to replace the vehicle, they gave her assistance with groceries and some funds for the car.

Considering the small size of the congregation, the pastor says, it is miraculous to see what God can do in and through it.

"To me, that's kingdom ministry. "We just pray, when God brings up opportunities, about what we can do. The kingdom of God is within us. We need to be listening to the Holy Spirit for what to do." ■



*Julius Lenhart (seated on right), a lay delegate from Trinity EC in Slatington, built a ramp for Ken Schira (to his left), pastor of Trinity EC in Berlinsville, after Schira's wife, Carolyn, was diagnosed with terminal cancer and could no longer climb the steps to their front door. Lenhart used his talents to create a ramp, worth an estimated \$9,000, for about \$1100 in supplies. District churches donated \$400 toward project costs and Lenhart and others donated their labor.*

# The Shift ... CPC to KEC

By Rev. Les Cool

**T**he EC Church is in the midst of shifting how we do ministry. This well-thought-out ministry shift prepares us to more effectively meet the goals Jesus has placed before us. Actually, this shift helps us refocus on the passion and purpose of the early church (Acts) and the early EC Church (Jacob Albright, et al.). And so we find ourselves intentionally poised to shift away from structures, programs and church toward people, relationships and Kingdom.

We are building on our denomination's recently adopted statement about the Church that helps us more clearly capture who we need to become:

***"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."***

Similarly, the Church Planting Commission finds itself refocusing what they do and how they do what they do. No longer simply focused on structures and programs, the emphasis had become people and discipleship. As modeled by Jesus and his disciples, and also Jacob Albright, the focus

is people, the people who are becoming the Church.

The CPC's definition of church planting (still taking shape) makes sense in light of the recent shift in how we do ministry:

***"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 who receive God's blessing and bless the world around them) is the fruit."***

One of the next steps as our adopted structural changes become our daily practice will include the Church Planting Commission (CPC) becoming, or more accurately being absorbed into the Kingdom Extension Community (KEC). Going forward, in addition to the care of our current and future church planters and plants (now, we're thinking broad brush strokes here), the KEC's purpose in relationship with the entire EC community – churches, pastors, church leaders, and congregations – will be:

- 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.

You've probably heard the Chinese proverb . . . "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Allow me to suggest that where we are and where we need to be can be approximated in a parallel statement . . . "Let the CPC plant a church and you have another church. Enable congregations to disciple and multiply, and you have a Kingdom movement." In both cases, the difference boils down to the difference between "an event" and "a lifestyle."

***"...enable congregations to disciple and multiply, and you have a Kingdom movement."***

You are invited to join us – the community of Evangelical Congregational Churches – in prayer as we move into the next exciting phase of our journey with Christ. May we keep our sights set upon the goals of Christ's Kingdom first, and then upon our churches and denomination as they parallel the ideas and goals of the Kingdom. ■

# Connections, Community Key in Kingdom Development

**K**ingdom is about the lordship of Christ," says pastor Tim King, "We would say the kingdom that Christ is building is people who enthrone Jesus in their hearts. It has a lot to do with discipleship."

King pastors two church plants, Christ House Church in Lancaster, Pa., and The Next Step in York. A kingdom mindset, he says, includes ideas like cooperative relationships and a sense of connected community.

One example is a team approach

to sermons, which King does side by side with a member of his congregation.

They meet during the week to study a passage and create a plan, then literally do the sermon together. Often, the group then breaks into small groups to discuss specific ways they can "do what they've learned" in the week ahead.

"It's doesn't always work," he admits, "but if you have thirty people and six different groups talking, one of them will go out there and do something."

When some discussed refugee care, for instance, they contacted Church World Services and – with about a week's notice – agreed to sponsor a family coming to Lancaster. They rounded up furniture, got an apartment ready and met the newcomers at the Lancaster Airport to welcome them to the city.

"On a basic level, there're just moving furniture together," King says. "But it moves us into a tighter community." ■

## PRAYING FOR CHURCH PLANTING

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



### CURRENT PROJECTS:

#### 7 Planters and 8 Plants

- Ephrata, Pa . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
- Harrisburg area, PA . . . Restore Community (Brian Parker)
- Lancaster, Pa . . . Christ House Church (Tim King)
- Philadelphia, PA . . . Comunidad Biblica (Rolando Diaz)  
\* Allentown, PA location
- 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.

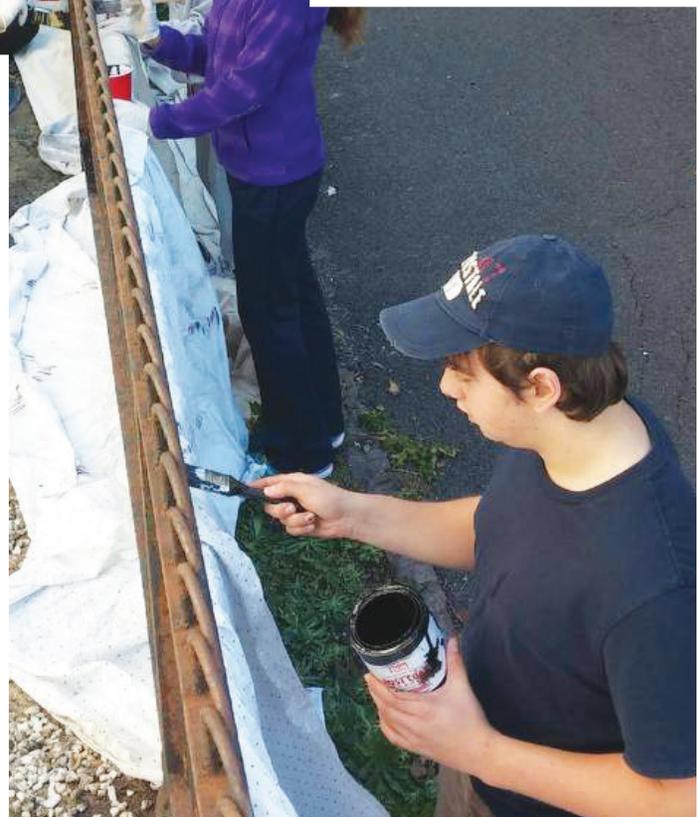
# Churches Combine Efforts in Kingdom Ministry Outreach

Three churches: Bethesda (Schuylkill Haven), Grace (Schuylkill Haven) and Bethany (Cressona) joined together for a "Church Has Left the Building" campaign this past October.

"Although we had done a few of these before we never did one in conjunction with other churches," Jeff Byerly, lead pastor of Bethesda, explained, "nor did we make such a deep impact on the community."

Participants went to local food bank and offered to help prepare homeowner's grounds for the fall or to do home repairs.

"We sent over 200 volunteers on church-mixed teams to 20 sites in southern Schuylkill County and spent over \$3,500 on the project," he adds. "We partnered with local businesses to help with costs." ■



*On Good Friday, multiple EC congregations joined together for an outreach event. Christ House Church of Lancaster joined with The Next Step, St. Paul's EC and Iglesia Cristiana (all of York) for the outdoor event, which involved creating historical scenes: Pilate, a family at Passover and people in prison who had met Jesus. Inside, a mime team presented the gospel message. Pastors Tim King and Carlos Kelly coordinated the efforts of about 50 congregants, and around 100 people from the community came to see the interactive, Kingdom-building experience.*