

partners

THE KINGDOM EXTENSION NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

KINGDOM OPPORTUNITY

Serving the community right where you are

The small community of Brownstown, Pa., gathers every year for a short Halloween parade followed by free food at the West Earl fire hall, which is literally 50 feet from the back door of Ebenezer E.C. Church, providing the congregation with a natural opportunity for outreach. For the last 11 years, the church has hosted a Harvest Fest on the Thursday before Halloween in conjunction with the other community events.

"It's an add-on to the annual parade," said Dave Weimer, who with his wife, Mary, organizes the event. "Hundreds of people attend the parade and then go to the fire house for food and drink afterwards, and the fire house backs up to the back door of the church."

The annual Harvest Fest got its start after the Rev. Keith Miller had been assigned as pastor to the church in 2005. After his first Halloween Parade, another member of the local ministerium commented that the church was dark during the event. "Maybe you should think about doing something," Keith recalls his fellow pastor suggesting.

Keith said he considered the possibilities and gravitated toward fun and games. "We showed videos, made a 'haunted tunnel' (cardboard boxes), created table and floor games, offered a fish tank, crafts, pumpkin painting, and face painting," he said. The church gave small candy bars to the children who participated.



Sharon and Ed Strausser man one of the games at the annual Harvest Fest hosted by Ebenezer EC Church, Brownstown

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In its first few years, about 50–70 kids attended. “Each year it continues to grow,” he said.

The Harvest Fest continues to offer “fun and games” with carnival-style booths, prizes and candy. The Weimers said this year’s event drew more than 160 kids, plus their parents and other adults. Planning for the event starts about six weeks before the event, when a group of volunteers from the church begin meeting weekly to plan the games. This year, a couple of church members who are skilled woodworkers made some games the church will be able to reuse in the future, Mary said. Kids can win one of three levels of prizes such as stuffed animals or this year’s most popular prize, fidget spinners.

“It’s something fun for the community to know we’re there,” Mary said. “The kids really enjoy it.”

“It’s a great community night,” Dave added. “You see people you haven’t seen since the last parade.”

The Weimers credit the support of current pastor Scott Phillips and their church family as vital to the success of the Harvest Fest.

“I think we enjoy it as much as the children do, and it brings us as a congregation closer together,” Mary said. “It is a blessing for all of us.”

And while the Harvest Fest has not resulted in an influx of church members, it remains a consistent way to make the church’s presence known to the community.

“We’re very successful in getting people into our church on that evening,” Dave said. “Any business or organization has to keep its name

out there. We need exposure. Harvest Fest is a universally attended event in Brownstown. We keep trying and believing there will be a breakthrough. But the main reason we do it is it’s great for the kids.”

The Harvest Fest lines up with the church’s other ministries to children in the community. The church is a Released Time site—once a week, elementary kids with parental permission are released to the church for religious instruction during the school day—and the annual Vacation Bible School.

“We keep our doors open for the community and hope people show up when the time is right,” Mary said.

Want to get your church involved in a community event?

Dave and Mary Weimer offer these tips:

Open the church. If there’s a communitywide event, find a way to participate.

Add, don’t duplicate. At the Brownstown event, the church isn’t open for games until the parade is finished. And the church doesn’t offer food because other organiza-



The scarecrow candy drop (candy came out of its nose) at the Brownstown Harvest Fest is one of about a dozen games offered during the annual community event.

tions offer food at the fire hall. Harvest Fest focuses on games. “We’re not taking anything away from the other events,” Dave said. **Involve people.** Ask for volunteers, donation and support. Have a sign-up sheet and promote it every week leading up to the event. ■

KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP:

Using your resources to impact your community

St Peter's Community Resource Center turns three years old in June. And it all started with a gift. When St. Peter's E. C. Church in Weissport, Pa., closed its doors, the remaining members donated their church building to the People's E. C. Church, located a little over a mile away in East Weissport..

"The People's congregation began to consider what to do with this empty building," said Ken Ogden who was the pastor at the time. "We evaluated the needs we saw in our community—drug use, unemployment, and poverty. And so we refurbished the church, established a 501c3 nonprofit, and opened as the St. Peter's Community Resource Center." People's E. C., the North East District, Bartonsville E. C., and others financially contributed to the \$10,000+ project.

The extensive building refurbishment was carried out by volunteers from People's E. C. They removed pews and the carpet, which was quite the chore because the foam had not been removed since it was installed in the 1960s. They painted the walls, created a handicapped-accessible bathroom

and storage rooms, and repaired the roof and the furnace.

Employees from Lowe's completed the landscaping, which was funded through a \$5,000 grant from Lowe's Hometown Heroes program. A young man built the snack bar to be used for fundraising events as his Eagle Scout project.

The resource center has a three-pronged focus:

- **Providing free or low-cost rental space to other nonprofits in the area.** Al-Anon meets weekly. STEP-UP Carbon County holds events as part of its work to combat the opioid/heroin epidemic.
- **Serving as a one-stop referral line to those in need.** A volunteer facilitator is available by phone to help individuals connect with nonprofits that can help with needs like heating oil, food, and housing.



- **Running the Bare Necessities Pantry for SNAP (food stamp) recipients.**

Participants receive toiletry items SNAP doesn't cover, like toilet paper, toothpaste, and soap. Through Second Harvest, St. Peter's is also able to provide a selection of meals to families each month.

Volunteers from People's and other churches run the pantry.

"Our volunteers don't stand behind tables," said Ken. "They are out among the people, getting to know them, hearing their stories, and praying with them. They are looking to build relationships."

Grants from businesses and organizations are used to purchase some of the toiletries. But local churches also help. Some have hosted a "toilet-tree" at Christmas—a tree fashioned from toilet paper decorated with toothpaste that provides a fun incentive for people to donate toiletries.

An empty church building has been given a new life as the St. Peter's Community Resource Center serves its community, caring for individuals and families in the name of Jesus.

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Want to do ministry for your community? Here are Ken's suggestions:

- **Understand the culture you live in.** Get to know your community before you start making plans.
- **Just do it.** Don't just talk about it. Contextualize the program to fit your community

needs and get started.

- **Don't look at it as "this is going to grow my church."** It has to be about loving people in Jesus's name.
- **Try things, be committed, and see the positive even if something doesn't work.** "We tried a worship service for six months," said Ken. "The

Leighton, Jim Thorpe, and East Weissport E. C. churches sent 10 people from each church to the service. Unfortunately, those using the pantry didn't come to the service. But the positive result was that congregants from the three churches got to know each other." ■

KINGDOM VISION: Seeing the needs wherever you are

You don't have to start an urban ministry to follow the call of God. You just have to open your eyes.

The people at Bridgeville E.C. Church in Narvon, Pa., have been reaching out to kids in Lancaster city for about three years because of their pastor Kirk Wolfe's job and a willingness to invest in and welcome others into their church. "God put the connections in place," Kirk said. "It's easy to see his orchestration. I was in the right place, the right job, to catch a vision."

Through his position as a Lancaster City police officer, Kirk built relationships with kids in and around the neighborhood where his office at an elementary school is located. He started to imagine a partnership between his church, with an aging congregation in rural Lancaster County, and elementary school kids in the city.

The congregation was ready and willing to make it happen and continues to support the ministry generously and enthusiastically. "They've really taken an interest in the kids," Kirk said. "I'm really grateful to the church. They took to these kids, and the kids have brought life to our church."

Every other Sunday, volunteers from the church make the 30–40 minute drive into the city to bring a vanload of kids to church where they often offer breakfast before the service. Some months, they host special events like a picnic in the summer or a Christmas party in December. When the church hosts VBS in the summer, church members make the daily drive to bring the kids to the event. And this past summer, they sponsored nine kids to spend a week at Twin Pines. Those kids, Kirk said, made decisions for Christ, and church members have purchased Bibles to help with their spiritual growth. Another special event was a trip to an Amish farm, made possible through a connection one of the church members had.

From that decision to welcome kids from the city, the church has had more opportunity to minister. Twice a month, a group of 8 volunteers from the church travels into the city to lead small groups for kids at a youth development agency in the city.

"They give up their Sunday afternoons to do this," Kirk said. And with Lancaster city's recognition as a welcoming city for refugees, Kirk believes the church could be ready to reach out in other ways, too.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS

Bridgeville's ministry to urban youth began with their pastor's bivocational status. But Kirk says anyone can do what they've done no matter the ministry.

- **Start with prayer.** "As you pray, ask God to show you a need. There will be a need wherever you are. Each person, if they take the time to look around, will see a need."
- **Recognize that your position is not a mistake.** "God did not put you there without a reason. He will always use you."
- **Begin building trusting relationships** if you aren't already in them with the people to whom you hope to minister. Kirk says his presence in one particular neighborhood for 13 years made him a trustworthy figure in these kids' lives, so the parents also trusted him with their kids.
- **Engage a group to help you.** Kirk credits his congregation with meeting the needs of the kids they bring to the church. "They put forth the resources," he said. ■

KINGDOM CREATIVITY

Discipling Young Men with Bibles and Beers

Kyle's friends wouldn't come to church with him, no matter how he asked. But he still wanted to do something to introduce them to Jesus and help them grow in faith. He approached his pastor, Mark Micklos, and asked if he would consider leading a men's Bible study that included beer.

Mark, who was just retiring from his ministry as pastor of Trinity E. C. Church in Fern, Pa., agreed to give it a try.

Bibles and Beer, as the study is known, meets monthly in a barn. The 7–10 guys who attend regularly pick topics they want to talk about and Mark teaches from the Scriptures, leading the discussion. "We have one rule," Mark said. "What's said in the barn stays in the barn."

"It's important for the guys to understand that Jesus was a real man, sitting around a campfire, talking with his friends," Mark said. "I just want to build the kingdom. I want people to know Jesus."

One young man who had been raised in the church but no longer attended talked to his church-going friend about the group. At first he was resistant. "Look," the first guy said, "when guys get together, they drink beer." If this is a normal part of their lives, why not bring Jesus into it? Now the young man who resisted has asked his own church to provide a similar study opportunity.

"These guys aren't getting drunk," said Mark. "In fact, they're

drinking less beer." But they are studying the Bible and learning to apply it to their own lives.

Mark and Kyle hope to get more guys involved until the group divides and moves into other areas. They hope to see

the unchurched men get plugged into churches.

"I think it's a movement of God in this area in a way they can relate to," said Mark. "It's an opportunity to impact them in a nonthreatening way that appeals to their culture." ■

Mark Micklos encourages every believer to creatively impact those in their neighborhoods:

- **Know your community.** "See yourself as a missionary. Learn the culture and speak the language. Here, it's hunting and fishing. But what works here might not work elsewhere." Be aware of the culture you are planted within.
- **Get out there.** "Do what the Lord leads you to do, but do something. We are to make disciples. Maybe where you are it's 'Bible and Ice Cream Sundaes.'"
- **Take a different approach.** "It's time to stop doing what we've done for centuries that isn't working."
- **If you happen to be the pastor, in this venue, just be a "guy."** Let them see another side of "the preacher."
- **Be relational in your everyday life before you start something.** "Build relationships in your daily life that could lead to the opportunity to share the Gospel. Get to know them in hopes of *someday* being able to talk with them about the Good News. People have to know who you are and that you care about them."
- **Have a missional heart.** Life for the believer should be about living God's mission of loving others so they come to know him as well.

To learn more about Bibles and Beers, contact Mark Micklos: 814-797-1389 • mdmicklos1@gmail.com
(Mark doesn't check this often, so he prefers you call.
After all conversation is best!)

Kingdom Extension Resources

Barnabas Initiatives

In blog and book, Barnabas Initiatives shares insights and stories. By seminars and storytelling, the ministry offers perspectives and strategies that can revitalize churches. In consultations, Barnabas Initiatives comes alongside churches to encourage and equip.

www.barnabasinitiatives.org

Dinner Church Collective

Ministries centered on Jesus' dinner table theology; Dinner Church Collective exists to help church leaders rediscover the power of a table.

www.dinnerchurchcollective.net

Fresh Expressions US

Start churches with people who don't go to church; provide live workshops and resources to help you connect with new people, revitalize your churches and empower pioneering leaders.

www.freshexpressionsus.org

Missio Alliance

Coming together under a common commitment to provide a place to address what faithfulness to Christ and his mission might look like for the churches of North America in the face of several new cultural challenges.

www.missioalliance.org

Praying for Church Planting

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Health and a sense of well-being for our planters and their families
- Protection from the negative impact of busyness
- Wisdom as planters and leaders develop outreach ministries
- Grace as young congregations develop community connections
- Vision and passion for reaching the yet-to-know-Jesus

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.