

Archived Articles for New Church Ministry
...What's Happening In Your Ministry?

New Church ministry is about partnerships and trying new ideas. Hear the story of Rev. Jeff Jackson as he shares his experience of beginning new ministries within his church.

Brighter Day (Disciples of Christ) recently participated in a joint consultation project with three other local Disciple congregations: Hilltop, Hiram, and Mantua Center through New Hope Partnership. The two-fold result of the consultation was to, first, renew our emphasis on recreational ministries and, second, to wholeheartedly embrace our partnership in ministry with other nearby congregations. We have added to our partnership ministry by initiating a values and service oriented ministry for children called Kids Making a Difference.

Also new is a ministry that combines fellowship and service. We have reached out to clients of the local food pantry and, once a month, offer a cooking class to help people find creative alternatives to cooking with food cupboard staples.

Participants are provided all of the ingredients, prepare the meal and take it home for their families to enjoy. We call this the Makin' Meals Ministry - it's M.M.M. good!

Finally, we continue to adapt our 30 minute worship gathering. Our hope has been to offer different areas so people might experience worship in a variety of ways (i.e. a prayer station or an art area). Although spatially challenged, we have been able to add a craft space where children gather. The area is within eyeshot of parents and where the children can still enjoy the band's music. By so doing, we try to maintain the intimacy of a small church gathering and respect the variety of ways folks make a connection to God through Jesus Christ.

-Rev. Jeff Jackson, Brighter Day

Sometimes even a new project needs a new start. Hear the story of Minister Wendy Taylor as she shares her story of loving the neighbor and welcoming the stranger.

The Free Store at Camp Christian, the rooted mission of The Delaware Project, re-opened for the 2013-2014 season September 14. In the first 2 weeks opened, 122 people benefited from the donated goods gathered from other Disciple churches, faithful donors and friends!

Additionally, The Free Store was granted a visit from VSP's mobile vision unit September 17, 2013. Nearly 100 people were given vouchers to get free vision exams & eye glasses. The Delaware Project is loving our neighbors through service, sharing & radical hospitality.

We are excited for the upcoming months, visioning community in Delaware and sharing the message of love & peace and encouraging personal relationships with each other and our God, in the name of Jesus, the one who humbly walked with those who longed for hope in a fragmented world.

-Minister Wendy Taylor, The Delaware Project

Balancing a family and a calling can be a tough balancing act. Hear the story of Rev. Debbie Saxe as she shares her passion for the lost and seeking.

There are few things in life as exciting as the birth of a child, and there are few things more difficult than the process that gets you there. I was well into my pregnancy with our newborn, Kieran, when I realized that, in a sense, our new church (Disciples Gathering) was one of these things. Almost like a twin, our family has been pregnant with a dream of a new and affirming faith community here in Westerville. We have grown and labored in our moving here, and indeed we continue to do so as we explore this ministry together.

This comparison may seem strange to some, and I will certainly limit Brian's claims to know what it's like to be pregnant. In retrospect, however, it seems a very natural claim. After all, what is church if not partnering with God for the expansion of a loving family for the inclusion of all her children? This is why we came to Westerville, to advocate for the inclusion and reconciliation of the unchurched, dechurched, and church-hurt. As the first intentionally Open & Affirming congregation in our community we have already been attracting Disciples diaspora from all over Columbus. Young adults who were nurtured by various congregations through their youth are coming here to feed their souls by expressing and experiencing the full spectrum of their faith- doubt, joy, fear, confusion, anger, compassion, laughter, study, discernment, and community.

In this collaborative ministry we are called by God to embody the teachings of Jesus and share in the liberating power of God's grace. In a spirit which celebrates diversity, we gather to learn, serve, worship, and advocate for God's blessings on all people. We create a safe environment where people in all stages of faith feel comfortable sharing their lives and asking questions. Indeed, I'm sure we will have many questions as we continue this journey together. With the support of the Regional Church and of congregations and individuals all across Ohio, however, we will continue to hear things like, "This is the kind of church I've been looking for." These are the kind of joys we look forward to sharing with you as we continue to birth a new church into being. Please join us in this celebration of life in Christ as we go forth to make disciples. You can follow our progress on Facebook or contact us directly for preaching dates, publications, and baby pictures. Thank you for your prayers and support.

-Rev. Debbie Saxe: Disciples Gathering

A part of forming new communities of faith requires the pastor developer to enter into authentic dialogue with new conversation partners. Hear the story of Rev. Ellen Huffman as she shares her experience of envisioning a new community of faith...

Rev. Seth Stout and I began visioning about a new faith community many months ago and Fringe: A Community Growing has beginning to become reality! There have been many exciting challenges and beautiful moments of blessing since we started this holy work together.

Perhaps most notable is our weekly meetings. We have started weekly Community Conversations, one in each of the neighborhoods we are targeting. So, Seth and I meet three times a week, each time with a different group of people. We have tried to allow the Spirit to move and let each group gradually define itself. After our third week, it is looking like our Monday and Friday groups will meet at local coffee shops and discuss a weekly topic. Thus far, we have discussed the topics: "Jesus Never Said That", Poverty in Columbus and Human Trafficking. Our Wednesday group, which meets at OSU, is made up of local college students and has already become a place where we can talk about serious college issues and our relevant and present God.

It is already clear that each group will be unique and each one seems excited about what we've explored and where we are heading next. I am thrilled and grateful that in each space - where we enter into intentional and open conversation - I have felt God's moving, playful and challenging presence. We hope and pray that each group will continue to grow and learn in the name of our God, who is doing a new thing with Fringe Community.

-Rev. Ellen Huffman, Fringe

New Church ministry keeps a church planter on the go. Hear the story of Rev. Seth Stout as he shares his story of working with a diverse group of individuals.

We're still in a gathering phase right now, and everything Ellen and I think we have defined is mutable. By a "gathering phase" I mean that since September when we started meeting our goal has been to attract those on the "fringe" of faith and young adult Disciples of Christ who are floating outside the many congregational choices they have here in Columbus.

We meet three times a week, each time in a different location, and each time with a different group with different needs. We planned for this and we thought we knew where these meetings were headed. Fortunately Ellen and I started our partnership knowing that the main reason to have a plan is so that there is something to deviate from. If there's one thing we're good at, it's deviating.

So what we thought were going to be three conversations that were variations of the same topic each week have transformed and are in fact in the midst of transformation. Our Monday nights in the Short North maintains its focus on social issues in relation to faith, but it becomes clearer and clearer each week that an additional service aspect is necessary. Currently we are learning and teaching others to knit in order to create scarves for those without homes who walk the High Street back and forth between Fifth Avenue and Second Avenue. In the midst of our conversations *about* poverty in Columbus, global poverty and Fair Trade, and Human Trafficking it has become clear that we need to seek God in those same people. Fearful and aware of our outsider status in relation to the men and women we want to learn with, there is hope in the click-clack of knitting needles. The scarves we will produce are a vehicle to get past the social constructs that stand between those of us enjoying a barista's hard week and those others who lack for basic warmth.

On Campus, we found that college students were blessedly ahead of Ellen and I. Instead of allowing us to determine what is best for them, they have boldly and faithfully lead Ellen and I towards what it is they are seeking. We are in the midst of a book study with them on *Love Wins* by Rob Bell. We are engaging on subjects that trouble all people of faith concerning: the nature of Salvation, the character of God, and what awaits us after this life. We are engaging not just in academic give and take, but in hopeful discernment together.

Finally, on Fridays we are feeling a partnership with Global Gallery grow and thrive. Soon we hope to start an open mic night there followed by time of creative group prayer.

God is filling our world with surprises, delight, and sometimes frustration....but that's why Ellen and I are on this path- we've been summoned to an awesome, scary, wonderful wilderness just outside our back doors.

- Rev. Seth Stout, *Fringe: a Community Growing*

What happens when two new church ministries are able to work together? Hear the story of Rev. Dr. Willie Barnes-Jackson as he shares his experience of working with other local congregations to enhance his own ministry.

Light of the Community Christian Church (DOC) in Dayton, Ohio is excited about the opportunity to fellowship with various other churches. The first is our current worship situation, which is that of being yoked together with another church known as Glory Honor & Power Ministries. It has given us the chance to experience some differences in worship and leadership styles specifically belonging to and developed under the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. As Light of the Community Christian Church is a new church start in Dayton approaching nine years together, so too is Glory Power & Honor Ministries who this year celebrated four years of worship and ministry.

Although the two church bodies have decided that combining is not their intended goal, leaders of both congregations have the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences for the chance to provide better worship and growth for each body. However both sets of pastors have left the final decision to that of the Holy Spirit and God Almighty. Each church brings to the table a Pastor and Co-pastor. Both sets of Pastors value family greatly and boast Godly marriage ties of 26 years for the Barnes-Jackson's and 37 years for the Kelly's.

These leaders get together and devise plans for growth and to provide outreach to the community. There was recently a yard sale fund raising drive and a meal giveaway to bring awareness of the presence of the churches there. Each small congregation offers its gifts of song, music talent, services, and liturgical dance to the worship experience and all four pastors alternate preaching the Word of God and they pray together.

The second form of fellowship which the Light of the Community Christian Church is experiencing is that of gathering for worship and song festivities with other churches aside from Glory, Honor, & Power Ministries. Light of the Community participates in the Fifth Sunday Song festival for the Southern Kingdom of the Christian Church in Ohio. The purpose of this gathering is to raise monies for the Sarah Wilson Scholarship and Star Supporter Funds which help to provide for the college education of upcoming ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

More recently, Light of the Community has had the opportunity to worship with a similar fellowship circle of seven small churches that fellowship with Glory, Honor & Power Ministries in the Dayton area. Each church, as does the Disciples of Christ' Song festival Circle, get to host the worship service held monthly. They offer a planned service with a guest speaker from within the group of churches, and the offering is utilized to provide support to the host church's ministries.

The third manner of fellowship is ministry to others churches by way of a Small Church Ministerial Alliance developed by Rev. Dr. Willie J. Barnes-Jackson for Light of the Community Christian Church (DOC). We are looking forward to the relationships that will be created by our God through the nurturing of this ministry. To God be the Glory!

Rev. Dr. Willie J. Barnes-Jackson, Pastor
Light of the Community Christian Church (DOC)

From camp to the cross. Hear the story of Rev. Parker as he shares his experience of a new church pastor.

Camp Christian. Summer of 1970. Evening Vesper service and the large wooden Cross. This memory has been burnt in my heart forever, maybe yours as well. I was attending Camp and met Jesus in a very deep and powerful way. I am certain as a 12 year old my call to ministry was taking root.

It is not surprising that in 2013 Living Faith Community Church, now over five years old, has embarked on Cross Walks, with our wooden 6 X 12 foot cross. Walks in and around Dayton, Ohio with words of encouragement, bottles of water to quench thirsts on very warm summer days, homemade loaves of bread and memories of Camp Christian, evening Vesper and the wooden Cross.

We are often asked “why another new church?” And we answer, it’s all about the Cross. People need hope. People need something and someone that can quench their thirst, even when the water bottle is empty. People need Jesus Christ.

That’s it. People need to know, experience and share the Good News. That is why Living Faith is around, some five years after being born. At times we have made it more difficult than this. We have over programmed, over worried, over counted the number of Sunday worshipers (or should I say empty pews). Yet all the while God just wants faithfulness. Faithful pursuit of knowing, experiencing and sharing the Good News, inside the walls of the church and around town. It’s a 24/7 journey.

And it’s all about the Cross.

So as we move into year six, we thank God for what He has done on the Cross for kids who have just come back from church camp, for adults who remember those awe inspiring outdoor camp services or others who are searching for a deeper relationship with the One who gives life.

One of the greatest blessings of a new church is that we get to try new things. We are kind of like a faith lab. And we get to share how God is working. The good news is that the Good News is still good news.

There is power in the Cross as we disciples carry the message of hope to a world in a world of need. We the church, whether new or old, can raise up this powerful symbol that points to new life in Christ, a message that will never die.

-Rev. Tom Parker, Living Faith Community Church

New Church Ministry comes with sunshine and rain. Hear the story of Minister Crucita Marrero as she shares her experience as a new church pastor.

The words of an old song came to my mind as I began to write this article. It goes something like this: *"I'm sorry, darling; I never promised you a rose garden; along with the sunshine, there's gonna be rain sometimes!"* It describes to me the life of a ministry, its ups and downs, its joys and woes, yet God's Sunshine is never far away.

There have been some beautiful moments during my five years as Minister of the Hispanic Church, Misión Cristiana El Faro – DOC, in Lorain. One of those nice things has been working with the Christian Temple's Congregation in the church's Pantry. The two congregations have served many hot meals and distributed necessary groceries to many needy families. Working together for the well being of our community has strengthened our relationship and has built up mutual respect. El Faro is blessed and proud to be a part of it.

Taking a drive through some of the streets in the city of Lorain, we see many depleted homes. Unemployment, hard times showcase their effect as we look at these eyes sores; they are ugly to look at and a health and safety hazard. The City has been doing what it can to demolish these houses. We have lived next to one of these properties for about eight years. We complained to the City about the grass and our safety. However, no one knew who the owner was and all the City could do was cut the grass sometimes.

We started to pray about it. It was a frustrating situation, especially when we had our youth and family rehearsals in the summer. We needed more space and here, staring us in the face was this fenced in, run-down home with its vacant, spacious lot next to us. We asked God to help us acquire that property for our youth and family drama program. Our vision: to turn that dead property into useful land for the Glory of God.

It was exciting how God led us to the owner. We explained who we were and what we wanted to do with it; he agreed to let us buy it for \$1500! Of course, we inherited all delinquent taxes, clean up and all the other issues.

We were blessed to connect with Rev. Chad Delaney of Mantua Christian Center. We planned a block-clean up; Delaney's volunteers, about 15 of them, came and helped tear down old fences, remove debris, dismantle things inside the house and open up the back alley with a bulldozer! Honestly, watching these wonderful men and women of God working with so much love was like seeing God Himself at work. And all they asked for was a Spanish lunch! The house is in deplorable condition; cost to repair, over \$23,000 in materials.

The dream: to tear it down and build El Faro's Church Playhouse, and continue working with area youth and families; to produce family friendly, Bible-based plays and programs; to give area youth the opportunity to shine their talents for God.

Vision: a new house, to do God's work.

It is a dream that will cost a lot of money. Our prayer is for God to open doors and make it happen. We believe He will. Amen?

-Minister Crucita Marrero, Misión Cristiana El Faro Discípulos de Cristo

Planting seeds is a common analogy for a new church pastor. Minister Cheryl Coggins shares her story as a new church pastor.

The birthing process of anything or of anyone is a mixture of emotions. Excitement of anticipation and excitement of seeing the fruition of “what will it look like” comes to pass.

As the seed develops there is a process that is necessary for the carrier to go through. While incubating the vision, uncertainty, loneliness, “I don’t have”, not to mention other elements that will try to creep in. Oh, yes! It’s during those times that when the moments of excitement comes in like a flood that there is a knowing the seed is growing.

Wow! A young man says, as he stands in front of the whole group: “I have missed being with you because I have had to work. I don’t cry like this but I have to say that I’m scared as I make this transition from high school to college. I don’t want to fail.” Excited, he trusts us!

Wow! When you find items that are closeouts, that will help in a person’s everyday life. Detergent, toilet paper, school supplies, etc. Things that others may take for granted. Excited, outreach!
Excited that the seed is growing!

-Minister Cheryl Coggins, Promise Fulfilled Ministries

In ministry God often calls us to places we never imagined serving. Hear the story of Rev. Trayce Stewart as she shares her experience of returning home to explore new church ministry.

Years after leaving Cleveland, I find myself again walking streets which were once so familiar. In the +10 years so much has changed which leaves this land looking quite different. There has been a change in elected government officials, community needs and the demographics of the city.

Richmond Heights is comprised of individuals who are extremely overworked and overcommitted. While their spirituality and faith are extremely important to them, by the time Sunday comes around there is little time or energy for them to connect with churches. This has led me to explore different models of ministry in order to meet the needs of the community.

Second Chance Christian Church is looking to partner with churches to facilitate growth and transformations across a person's entire life. Rather than just focusing on the spiritual dimension, we believe a person can only live into their true purpose and potential when the entire being is taken care of: mind, body and soul. One of our initial plans is through a track club for children and youth. The reality is so many children do not get out and play anymore. Video games, technology and twenty-first century living has led to a decrease in outdoor exposure, and this includes physical activity. Second Chance Track will give children an outlet to burn energy, engage in healthy activities and connect them with the church in a non-threatening way. While children are at practice, parents and adults will have the opportunity to attend classes on a variety of topics over the summer. While many will look at this and say this isn't what the church is about, I believe this is exactly what Jesus would have us do: engaging with people around issues that affect their life and entering into new relationships.

-Rev. Trayce L. Stewart, Pastor Developer-Second Chance Christian Church

New Church is about taking the great commission seriously. Our Regional Pastor & President, Dr. William Edwards, shares about the New Wineskins Campaign.

As followers of Jesus Christ we are commissioned to “Go and make disciples.” (Matthew 28:19) This is not a suggestion, but an imperative known as the “Great Commission”. We have been empowered and commissioned as God’s transformed people to be transforming agents in the lives of others through the message of the Gospel.

Starting new churches embodies the Great Commission of Jesus to take his message to all people. New church starts serve as mission stations for the Kingdom of God. Through new congregations of believers, the Gospel is spread in both new and changing communities where people live, relate, learn, work and serve. New churches are able to attract a diverse population without barriers. Studies show that 60 to 80 percent of new members in new church starts come from the “unchurched”. Established churches play a vital role in fulfilling the call to reach people by being a part of starting a new church.

The Christian Church in Ohio has always had New Church Establishment as a priority. Our Regional Church has a rich tradition and history of involving established Disciples congregations in starting new churches. The “New Wineskins” initiative has proven to an easy way for Disciples congregations to be involved in the mission of starting new churches. The “New Wineskins” offerings from congregations and individuals have enabled our Regional Church to launch 3 new church projects in 2013.

May your prayers and involvement in supporting new church be your witness to making Disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

-Rev. Dr. William H. Edwards, Regional Pastor & President