

# KINGDOM EXTENSION

The Kingdom Extension Community continues to create and entertain conversations designed to nudge pastors, leadership teams, and churches toward intentional missional ministry. It is rather difficult “To [Fully] Know Christ and [Begin To] Make Him Known” if we don’t engage him in daily life outside the church building and encounter people not-yet-in-the-Kingdom in spiritual conversation. And so, we nudge!

We have continued to promote, encourage attendance at, and sponsor scholarships for Exponential, Fresh Expressions, and other Kingdom-focused teaching-learning events across the denomination. Our goal is to expose pastors and churches to resources that are available for our churches as we think outside of the building.

We have also begun to make better use of available technology to provide teaching-learning experiences and to hold missional conversations. We have produced a video version of the 2018 National Conference educational experience (Vimeo) that can be used wherever you have an internet connection. We have run a series of Zoom conversations sponsored by members of the KEC team. These were well received by those who participated.

We continue to enjoy watching Community EC (Sinking Spring, PA) support their several fresh expressions. Tim King and his leadership team are settling into a new church building and community (Ephrata Grace EC) with hopes of reaching the yet-to-be-reached. Grace Community (Willow Street, PA) is surfing new waters as Addison Roberts leads their foray into the world of Virtual Church. We will learn much from this exciting adventure. Dinner church continues to be a valuable ministry for several of our churches (Mohnton – Bob Shuey, Slatington – Brian Kern, Community EC – Mike Snedeker) as they reach the unreached in a new way in their neighborhoods.

Along the way, we have been privileged to hear stories of creative, sometimes unusual and exciting, ministries. Each story reflects the goodness of God and the creativity of his people. We continue to pass along these stories to the greater EC world by way of the Partners Newsletter. Our hope is that the stories will inspire others to launch new ministry initiatives.

We covet your prayers as we continue to support these vital ministries for our EC family. We realize that prayer is the fuel behind these many ministries, both old and new. We thank you for your faithful financial support. Each generous donation helps make possible some of the above mentioned ministries, as well as allows us to provide “as needed” training and resources. We also look to you for stories we have yet to pass along. Thank you in advance for helping us help others.

## **Kingdom Extension Community Members**

**(We are all listed in the National Conference Journal. Drop us an email or text, give us a call. As time allows – we all have day jobs – we will chat with you, brainstorm with you. Together, we can learn from each other, and then go and make disciples.)**

**Rev. Leslie Cool, Associate & Chair; Bishop Rev. Bruce Hill; Rev. Ron Anderson; Rev. Andrew Brubaker; Rev. Matt Hill; Rev. Carlos Kelly; Mrs. Lynda Miller; Rev. Adam Roberts; Mrs. Michelle Roberts; Rev. Tim Seiger; Rev. Mike Snedeker; Rev. BJ Whitaker; Rev. Todd Wolfe.**

## **CURRENT PROJECTS:**

- **Churches and Church Plants**
  - Ephrata, PA . . . Christ House Church (Tim King)
  - Ephrata, PA . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
  - Lehigh Valley, PA . . . Horizon (Bud Daneker)
  - Pottstown area, PA . . . Journey53 (Rick Christman)
  - Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)
  - Willow Street, PA . . . Virtual Church (Addison Roberts)
  - York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)
  - York, PA . . . The Next Step (Carlos Kelly)
- **Partnerships**
  - Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
  - Mohnton, PA . . . Dinner Church (Robert Shuey)
  - Palmerton, PA . . . Gaming Grotto (Chris Bronico)

- Reedsville, PA . . . LifeTree Café (Jeff Byerly)
- Sinking Spring, PA . . . Fresh Expression Launches
- Slatington, PA . . . Dinner Church (Brian Kern)

### **Discipleship and Kingdom Extension**

KEC conversations about missional ministry often circle back to the need for disciples and healthy (or healthier than we sometimes experience) churches. In the same way you cannot build with bricks that haven't been baked, you cannot build churches with members who have not been discipled. Well, you could, and in both cases with less-than-desired results – collapsed buildings and ineffective churches.

We recently partnered with 3DM for a now completed onramp huddle (preparing pastors) leading up to an extended Learning Community (LC) that recently launched its first immersion event at Community EC in Sinking Spring, PA. This LC will cover two years, include four immersion events (multi-day leader gatherings for debrief, training and encouragement) and leader coaching. The total experience alternates teaching-learning with months of hands-on experience for our congregations.

The KEC has provided initial scholarships for four churches (Christ House in Ephrata, Emmanuel in Hatfield, First in Palmyra, and Plymouth Meeting) as they seek professional discipleship training. Each church has a team involved in this new Learning Community. Their goals include creating or enhancing a discipleship culture, making a shift from doing church toward being missional, and identifying players to draw into the process.

### **Missional Ministry Zoom Chats**

The KEC has completed a series of Zoom chats with missional themes. Each Zoom session included a KEC member sharing seed ideas as they led a conversation around the topic. Themes included discipleship, food as a missional tool, being missional at work, scheduling time to be missional, and starting conversations. The goal, to expose pastors and others to basic concepts that feed missional activity, was met – based on the response of participants. We began during the sketchy weather months. We plan to offer more sessions in the future.

### **Plant versus Church**

Occasionally, KEC team conversations include topics, issues, and concerns that are above our pay grade. Well, we think they are! Since we gathered at National Conference in May 2018, we have played with and passed along to the BEDAS team (most likely to be passed on to other teams) a couple of questions we thought needed to be addressed. These interesting questions addressed some of the new realities we have been experiencing that seem to fall outside of existing EC policies.

We had realized that most of the existing (and longer standing) EC church plants and missional ministries are now outside the hands-on ministry of the KEC. Aside from casual KEA conversations, most just press on, doing what they have been doing. They seem to be churches. Just not chartered, and not large. All seem to be serving the Kingdom. Most seem to be stable (or stable-ish), though small or smaller.

In the end, we developed a proposal, with supporting documents, that was handed off to the Bishop and BEDAS team. Our desire was to see appropriate E.C. leaders take our conversation places we could not. Future conversations will discuss the definition of church (closer to the ground than a recent philosophical document took us) and the value of chartering (beyond Ministry Funds which even some churches ignore), as well as ponder the care of church plants and missional ministries that pass beyond the fingers of the KEC.

It was our intention that these conversations should ultimately lead to updating sections of the Discipline and Rules of Conference, specifically regarding the definitions of church, church plant, and chartering. We also understand that these conversations and changes will probably impact our role in the E.C. church planting world.

### **Chartering, Church Plants, and Rehabilitation**

Somewhere in the conversation about church plants and missional ministries we are responsible for (see above item), we stumbled into a “chat” about the chartering process that leads to “becoming a church.” But this chat was other than the one noted above. Here we toyed with the question: Why do we expect certain structures and behaviors to be in place (e.g., solid core of active members, financial stability, proven leadership, history of doing church, history of maintaining and turning in reports, effective discipleship, etc.) before we allow a plant to charter, while we allow churches to continue to plod along or even dwindle without the said structures and behaviors in place that we expect of church plants?

We decided that the seeming inconsistency was answered as we fleshed out the difference between “structures and behaviors we want in place” so that new churches start out on a healthy path, while the ministry we offer to older, maybe declining churches, is more like rehab work. We are hoping to restore these latter churches to a more healthy status. Not asking them to start fresh (though that might be an option), but to guide and assist them to redevelop atrophied muscles. We had no solid resolution to this concern. And so, along with the above questions, we passed this along to the Bishop and BEDAS team for further consideration.

### **Fragile Lives, As-Needed-Training, and Soul Care**

Not necessarily a planned element of my role as Kingdom Extension Associate, the heaviest weight I have carried so far has been the many contacts I have had with men and women struggling in and with ministry. The struggles are very real. As is their pain. I had not realized how good I have it in the little world that consumes my time and energy.

We often joke that a church usually wants a pastor in his early 30s with a grad degree, wife, 2 or 3 young children, and 15 years of experience. Why? So he might attract young families to the church. That he might live long enough to make a difference. That he might have experiences enough to be all that is needed at his new church. Sadly, this is not how it works.

Young men (or not young men) take on a charge, trained or being trained, but often with fewer ministry experiences than he might need to handle the situations (crises or otherwise) that he will encounter. Funerals. Weddings. Crisis counseling. Waking up every Monday pregnant with yet another sermon (this can be overwhelming to some). Why do we assume these matters are “in the bag” as we launch men into church ministry? It might be beneficial for us, as a tribe, to ponder what more we might do to make sure our pastors (and church leaders) are better prepared in these areas.

And then there is the matter of soul care. Everything I have mentioned above is a potential drain on the human soul, even upon the Spirit-enlivened human soul. The Grip-Birkman identifies three energy components of the person – social, physical, and emotional – and they all run off the same battery. No wonder we run out of steam, lose perspective, and make poor choices. We have watched sin take men out of ministry. We have watched poor health minimize a ministry. We have watched exhaustion sideline valuable leaders. Why do we naively press on, seemingly assuming they will sort this out and do what is best? Or that they even recognize that the ship (life or ministry) is taking on water?

The KEC recognizes the need for soul care events for pastors and other church leaders (including office/clerical/support staff). We admit that these soul care events are outside our calling as a Community; but it is in our field of concern as fellow soul travelers. Who will take up this vital aspect of support for our men and women in the trenches of ministry?

If I had a magic wand (for which I might be run out of ministry), I would wave it and fix the many things I have mentioned above. But I don't. So I cannot. But I firmly believe that we can address these many concerns as a tribe. The E.C. Church, empowered by God, is enough and has enough, to take on everything God has called us to do. The issue here is that we only take on what we have been called to do.

My friends, allow me to remind us all what we are to be about. We are to be about the redemptive mission of God, launched by Jesus, fleshed out in the Church that bears his name. We are to be message bearers of God's invitation to join his Kingdom (The Great Commission). We are to be about loving one another and loving our neighbors (The Great Commandment). We are to be missionaries, learning (or exegeting for understanding) our communities and ministering in ways that make sense to those to whom we minister. We are to avoid getting sucked into the busyness (even the good busyness) that distracts us from our mission, “go and make disciples.”

Your Kingdom Extension Community depends on your prayers and support as we seek to be what our pastors, church leaders, and churches need as they seek to honor God's call upon their lives. We are grateful for your support – hands and feet, skills and abilities, and financial gifts. Together, we will realize greater Kingdom impact.

For the privilege and opportunity we have to serve Christ's Kingdom, our churches, and our planters, we thank you.

Submitted,

**Rev. Leslie Cool, KEC Associate  
for the Kingdom Extension Community**