

# partners

THE CHURCH PLANTING NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

## BLESSINGS ABOUND as Two Congregations Find Common Ground

by Kolleen Long

*It started with a straightforward request...*

One Wednesday in May 2008, Pastor Abimael "Abe" Montanez came to an evening prayer meeting at Ephrata Grace EC Church. Montanez introduced himself, recalls Pastor Jeff Martin, and explained he was the leader of an Hispanic church plant meeting in "the boonies." Montanez asked if it would be possible to meet in the Ephrata church building, hoping the location might increase his attendance.

When Martin took the idea to his ministry council, he says, "We thought this was kind of a neat idea." Leadership from Grace met with Montanez as well as a representative from his denomination, then held a special congregational meeting in July 2008. An overwhelm-

ing majority of church members voted to approve the use of the building by Montanez' fledgling congregation on Sunday afternoons and Tuesday nights. The Hispanic church, House of Blessings, began holding services there the following month.

Deciding to share their facilities has been a positive experience, says Martin. "Our church is over 100 years old and a lot of our people are older; they've been around for years," he adds. "It's kind of exciting for all of us to be involved in something that's new and different. We're all being stretched a little bit - that's always a good thing."

This was the first time Grace EC had allowed another congregation to use their facilities, and they sought out ways to show friendship to the newcomers. In November, Martin says, the two groups met for a combined service. "It was very good, very good," Martin says. "Their group is very small; that's one of



*Grace EC Church, Ephrata, recently voted to adopt House of Blessings, a Latino congregation that began meeting on the property in August 2008. The congregations are led by (from left) Pastor Abe and Abby Montanez and Pastor Jeff and Dawn Martin.*

the frustrations he's had."

Since then, the two congregations have joined together many times. Martin says anytime his church has a special event - such as a Christmas dinner, special worship speaker or children's outreach - they invite their Hispanic friends to attend. In addition, some of Grace's members have started attend-

*(Continued on page 2)*

**2** Help Make Light the Work – *Become a Church Plant Partner*

**3** CPC Member Takes Partnership a Step Further

**4** Tallmadge Church Labors for Neighbors

(Continued from page 1)

ing the Hispanic worship service, which starts at 2 p.m. Among these are Martin's son-in-law, Cesar Santiago, who is the worship leader for Grace EC and is fluent in Spanish.

Over time, Martin explains, Montanez was frustrated by a lack of support from his parent denomination. The two pastors began discussing the possibility of a more formal relationship: the adoption of the Hispanic congregation by the Anglo one. In April 2009, Grace EC held a special meeting and members voted to adopt the church plant.

"What we're saying is that this is no longer a group that meets in our church," Martin explains. "This group is now part of our church. This is really exciting, it's a big step."

Over the next two years, Montanez's congregation will decide if they want to become an EC church plant. Martin, who is on the Church Planting Commission, thinks this could fill a crucial gap in the EC

***"It's kind of exciting for all of us to be involved in something that's new and different. We're all being stretched a little bit - that's always a good thing."***

- JEFF MARTIN

denomination, which has few active Latino congregations in Lancaster County. "If [they decide] yes," Martin affirms, "that could maybe start something good."

As Martin looks back on his first meeting with Montanez, he

notes it did not start out as an effort to broaden the EC denomination. "It wasn't an EC thing, but it was a kingdom thing," he says. "And now it has a chance to become an EC thing. God has a good sense of humor."



**Horizon** - Bud Daneker  
- Allentown, PA

**Maranatha** - Salvador Cardoso  
- Highland Park, IL

**Vida Nueva** - Ramon Mendez  
- Lancaster, PA

**Comunidad Biblica Cristiana**  
- Rolando Diaz - Philadelphia, PA

**Vida Nueva**  
- Ramon Mendez - Reading, PA

**Buenas Nuevas** - Edwin Mieses  
- West Hazleton, PA

**Iglesia Cristiana**  
- Carlos Kelly - York, PA

**Restart** - Brian Kern  
- Slatington, PA

**Restart (New Direction)**  
- Tim Ream - Tallmadge, OH

**Restart (Dwelling Place)**  
- Robert Stoner - Gratz, PA

**Revitalization (Bethany)**  
- Keith Blank - Sunbury, PA

## HELP MAKE LIGHT THE WORK

**A**s Great Commission people, the goal of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to plant healthy churches that plant healthy churches. This endeavor is a group activity. When we come together, we can accomplish so much more. Becoming a Church Planting Partner makes good sense for people in a church planting denomination.

Currently, we sponsor new church plants, church adoptions and church restarts. You can help "make light the work" by becoming a church planting partner, whether as an individual, a family or through your church or other group.

A church planting partner regularly prays for our church planting ministries and makes an annual \$100 donation to church planting. Feel free to send your \$100 today (payable to "Church Planting;" EC Church Center, 100 W. Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067). And while you wait for more specific prayer concerns, please begin to ask God to bless our current church planting ministries:

## PRAYING FOR CHURCH PLANTING

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

### PRAYER POINTS:

The EC Church Planting Commission (CPC) is committed to helping churches plant healthy churches that proclaim Christ to a hurting world. With this in mind, please join us as we pray:

- That God would empower the CPC to guide and resource our existing church planters.
- That God would encourage our current planters as they seek to connect with their communities.
- That God would enable the people of the EC Church to identify new communities in need of an evangelical witness.
- That God would infuse our people with excitement regarding the work He is accomplishing through our church planting ministries.
- That God would draw out and raise up individuals interested in church planting ministry.



# TOP 10 WAYS TO SUPPORT A CHURCH PLANT

The ministry of church planting, though often done by individuals and small groups, is best accomplished by the greater church community. Money always seems to be a good way to support a church plant. But the following list offers some of the less often considered ways to support a church plant. And what you might think would be of greatest importance is not always so.

**10.** Donate reams of copy paper (white, as well as assorted colors) for the necessary printing that must be done to make a church plant work.

**9.** Donate sleeves of coffee cups and dessert plates for the pre-meeting social times that allow for the development of deeper relationships with the

“new people” who are checking out the new church in town.

**8.** Offer to donate a day to do whatever needs to be done. Most planters are so busy trying to meet people that the day-to-day stuff of church life (reports, opening the mail, setup and cleanup at the meeting place, etc.) gets put off until....

**7.** Volunteer to help with community outreach: placing door hangers, assembling bulk mailings, knocking on doors, making phone calls, etc. Planters are often in need of “physical help” in the early days of the ministry.

**6.** Donate specific pieces of equipment (tables, matching folding chairs, projector, portable screen, sound equipment, computer, coffee makers, etc.) that will enhance the ministry of a church plant. Just ask. Most planters have a wish list.

**5.** Drop a note of encouragement in the mail. Sure, our planters hear from Conference Ministers, the Bishop and the Church Planting Associate. But there is nothing like being reminded that “people in the pews” from other churches are praying.

**4.** Volunteer for a period of time to do for them what it is you do for your own church. Teachers can teach. Nursery workers can assist with child care. Treasurers can handle financial tasks. When starting from scratch, these positions are often difficult to fill. Your volunteer “expert” could also provide the necessary training when needed.

**3.** Skip church one Sunday and visit the worship service of an area church plant. Call ahead and coordinate treating the planter and his family to lunch. Your presence can be a powerful encouragement.

**2.** Write a check to cover the cost of a community mailing, a set of matching tables or a piece of sound equipment. Your “designated gift” takes the pressure off of deciding what to purchase with the donated cash. These gifts are best offered after asking, “What do you wish you had?”

**1.** Provide the treat of a two- or three-day getaway. Planters are often broke, tired and in need of rest. Offer your cabin, with a stocked pantry and refrigerator. Include money to “hire” a quality speaker to cover the missed Sunday if a weekend is included.

## CPC MEMBER TAKES PARTNERSHIP A STEP FURTHER

Tasha Byerly, a member of the Church Planting Commission, felt challenged to provide intentional support to a church plant. At home, she discussed ideas with her husband, Jeff, who pastors Bethesda EC Church in Reedsville, and the two soon thought of the church planters from Horizon, Allentown.

Horizon had sent its weekly prayer email to the Reedsville church for several years, says Bud Daneker. During that time, the pastor adds, he received occasional encouraging feedback from one or two of the people from Bethesda.

Tasha confirms that her home church prayed regularly for Horizon and also provided some financial gifts over time. But she resolved to search for a more meaningful way to encourage the Danekers: “I feel there is a way that we, as a church body, can support them more than that.”

So, one Sunday in April, the Byerlys arranged to attend worship services at Horizon instead of Bethesda. A few weeks later, the Danekers visited Reedsville in return. Now, leaders at Bethesda are developing a plan to arrange other such visits.

“Our hope is that someone from our leadership ministry team will go down at least one Sunday a month to visit [Horizon] and encourage Bud and Donna,” Tasha says, “to show

them our support not only in a prayerful way but also in a physical and tangible way.”

While financial support remains a crucial need at the church plant, Daneker says, he is also encouraged by the potential relationship between the two congregations. “Not many of the people who attend Horizon have an EC background,” he notes. “In fact, the church background of most people varies from none at all to Roman Catholic and all flavors in between. To be honest, most of the people really don’t care. Their connection is with this particular church: Horizon. So, to be able to build positive connections with another EC Church can only benefit.”

While visits can be a support to the Horizon congregation, Tasha adds, “what we are focusing on is supporting Bud and Donna.” She notes that church planters face a unique set of stresses and challenges and could often use the specific support.

“Church planting is quite a lonely endeavor,” Bud confirms, “There’s no office, no staff, no building where people drop by. The problems and hurdles encountered in church planting are entirely different than what I experienced in 20-plus [years] of ministry in established churches. Hence, it really is nice when peers are interested in what is happening here.”

# Tallmadge Church Labors for Neighbors

As they prepare for an official launch in November, worshippers at the Tallmadge, Ohio, church restart are already making a quiet but effective impression on their community.

"We have a nice group coming," says Pastor Tim Ream, which includes teenagers and elementary-age students and their parents, as well as a handful of senior citizens. "We are blessed with a group of doers, folks who want to do things."

"We have had several folks coming who were very interested in getting the church cleaned up and repainted," Ream explains. "We've spent a decent amount of energy doing that, with Easter being our goal to getting things done."

By Resurrection Sunday, most of the interior of the church had a fresh coat of paint. Outside, overgrown trees and brush were taken out to improve curb appeal and accessibility to the building. Workers cleaned up a

garden area in time for a Sunrise service, and one man volunteered to make omelets and pancakes for a fellowship time afterwards. Thirty-three people worshipped at Tallmadge on Easter, an increase from the average attendance in the low 20s.

Later in the spring, the church participated in a "Labor for Your Neighbor" worship experience. Instead of a normal worship service, "whatever that is," Ream explains, the

group met for coffee, donuts and prayers before heading out into the neighborhood to help people with projects. They spent the morning and part of the afternoon fixing fences, picking up trash, mowing, painting, weeding and trimming. "Rather than sitting in the church," Ream says, "we want to go out and be the church."

This summer, the Tallmadge group will host a community festival. They have already contracted a carnival company to bring rides and food trailers, and are inviting other churches, service clubs and

local crafters to participate. A current need for this event, Ream said, is a flatbed trailer to house a sound system for Christian entertainers from local congregations. Church volunteers will be on hand to pass out literature and talk to visitors.

"We want to approach the people who are listening," Ream says, "and ask them if they know what the words to the songs are all about."

*"Rather than sitting in the church, we want to go out and be the church."*

- PASTOR TIM REAM



*One beautiful spring morning, the congregation from the Tallmadge, Ohio, church plant headed out into the community to help neighbors with outdoor projects like painting and yard work. Pictured from left are Judy Reinheimer, Nancy Chapman, Pam Ream, Lillie Balca, Sharon Nemeth, Ed Reinheimer and Ron Balca.*

**COMMISSION MEMBERS** • Bishop Rev. Kevin Leibensperger, Chair • Rev. Ralph Owens, Secretary • Mr. Robert Barley  
 • Rev. Leslie Cool, Church Planting Associate • Tasha Byerly • Rev. David Dick • Rev. Jeffrey Martin • Rev. Ramon Mendez  
 • Pam Ream • Mike Snedeker • Rev. B. Bruce Wagner (Delaware Region) • Rev. Gary Brown (Great Lakes Region)  
 • Rev. Frederick Moury (Susquehanna Region) • Rev. Randy Sizemore, Director of Global Ministries

**Newsletter Staff** • Kolleen Long, Editor  
 • Maureen Logan, Art Director  
 • Brenda Long, Administrative Assistant

partners

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH PLANTING COMMISSION OF THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

100 West Park Ave, Myerstown PA 17067  
 717-866-7581 • eccenter@eccenter.com  
 www.eccenter.com

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization  
 BULK RATE  
 U.S. Postage PAID  
 Myerstown, PA 17067  
 Permit No. 8