

partners

THE CHURCH PLANTING NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

Going Out to the World . . . One Community at a Time

by Kolleen Long

RICK CHRISTMAN is currently pulling double duty. A 23-year ministry veteran, he currently serves as children's pastor at Trinity EC Church, Boyertown, Pa., and at the same time leads Journey 53, a missional group set to officially launch in spring 2012.

The name is significant to those involved in this church planting outreach. "We see our life as journeying with others," Christman explains. "And the 53 stands for the 53 thousand people in the Pottstown area who do not know Christ. Our goal is to reach them through relationships and missional living."

Christman likens the idea of missional communities to Philip running alongside the chariot (see Acts 8). "As we live life with people and they get into situations, they ask us, 'What do you think about this,'" Christman says, and the opportunity to share spiritual truths arises.

Currently, Journey 53 includes six families from Trinity, including one new convert. Several of the families serve as a leadership core and meet every other Friday for "Vision Casting," when they discuss specific missional relationships and pray for individuals involved by name.



Journey 53 is a new missional outreach led by Pastor Rick Christman of Trinity EC Church, Boyertown, Pa. As a missional community, those involved strive to build relationships as a bridge to share Christ with friends, neighbors and coworkers. Look inside this Partners for more on missional outreach.

The entire community gathers for a monthly celebration, generally in the home of a core leader. By October, Christman anticipates Journey 53 may need to rent a facility for the celebrations, which are designed to celebrate what God has done among them. "It's an opportunity for those who've come to Christ to share testimony and be baptized," he says, noting that most of the outreach of the group is done outside of these monthly gatherings.

(Continued on page 4)

Snapshot of a Missional Community

Brian and Kristin Parker are using a missional community model for their new church plant effort in the Harrisburg Area. Brian, who grew up in the Methodist church and has worked as a Christian camp counselor, college campus ministry worker and pastor in a traditional church setting, felt called in January to leave his job as associate pastor at Trinity EC Church, Harrisburg, and begin this church plant. We talked recently with Brian about his new missional project, the philosophy behind it and how a relationship-driven community of believers functions both practically and as part of the universal Church.

What lead you to this outreach?

Many people I was engaged with were interested in spiritual things, but were not attempting to find answers to their questions inside the local church. As I began to research this shift, I found myself a part of a much larger discussion that had been going on for years. As Western Christendom began to collapse in places like Europe, Australia, and the United States, many were discussing the mission of the church, which is derived from God Himself, who is a missionary God.

I began to be awakened to the reality that, from Genesis through

Revelation, God is seen on a mission to rescue His people and His world from the bondage of sin and death. We as Christ-followers have been invited into this mission. It takes us far beyond the church building and into the lives of the many not-yet-Christians we work and live with. This truth, along with my continued study and a strong call by God, has led me to plant a church using missional communities.

How do you define missional communities?

At the heart of the definition is a group of people whose identities are being changed and transformed by Jesus. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is telling His followers who they are: "You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth." Throughout the rest of the New Testament the authors continue reminding the people of God of who they are in Christ, before he calls them to do anything.

Missional communities, then, are defined by their identity, as a sent people, sent to be disciples of Jesus in the world and for the sake of the world. They are mid-sized groups [20-50] living out their "sentness" together, making the kingdom of God tangible in a neighborhood or network of relationships by bringing God's love, forgiveness, compassion and justice to specific people. Missional communities carry their worship of God into every moment and space of life, from the marketplace to the neighborhood, bringing the blessing of Christ with them.

How does this definition tie into your work in Harrisburg?

Our purpose as a community is to create spaces where people can be transformed and join God on His



A new missional community is meeting in the Harrisburg area under the direction of Pastor Brian Parker. The group, which gathers once a month to serve their greater community, partnered with a citywide "Love Harrisburg" project to help clear trash and weeds from vacant lots. They next hope to partner with the city's schools to provide backpacks, school supplies and even meals to children in need.

mission to redeem and restore His World. Our objective is to build into the core group the DNA of disciple-making by creating weekly and monthly rhythms that reflect the life of Christ. [We want to] create a discipling culture so that we plant the Gospel and make disciples who will move from consumers to producers who will multiply themselves through huddles [or small groups] and missional communities out of which the church will be birthed (See Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Tim 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:11).

What do you have planned for the days and months ahead?

Over the next 12 months, each Core Team member will engage culture daily by striving to build significant relationships and identify the next steps to influence those relationships

“Missional living is living out a life that Christ offers and allowing people to get close enough to you that they can see you, and they want that life, too.”

– BRIAN PARKER

discipleship and accountability; will spend time in Scripture, prayer and personal reflection in order to hear and respond to God's voice; and will gather as a community each month to worship God. Within the next nine to 15 months, [we hope] to launch two more huddles in which those who have been discipled will multiply and disciple others.

The Christian faith is lived not in isolation, but in community and extended family. Through experiencing community, we will

towards spiritual life transformation. Each member will embrace the Cross by participating in a DNA huddle group that meets every-other week for

prepare to build a missional community of 15 to 30 people over the next 12 to 18 months, in the hopes of multiplying this community into two or three others over the next three to five years.



The **PURPOSE** of the Church Planting Commission of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to know Christ and make Him known.

The **MISSION** of the Church Planting Commission of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to help churches plant healthy churches that proclaim Christ to a hurting world.

The **VISION** of the Church Planting Commission is that the Evangelical Congregational Church becomes a Church Multiplication movement, realized when churches plant healthy churches that plant healthy churches.



PRAYING FOR CHURCH PLANTING

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

Pray for our church planters by name (see the current list of planters).

ASK GOD TO:

- Meet the personal needs of our planters and their families.
- Oversee the protection of our planters from Satan's attacks.
- Remove harmful distractions from the planters' lives.
- Energize our planters for effective leadership.

Pray for our church works by name (see the current list of plants).

ASK GOD TO:

- Meet the financial needs of our planting ministries.
- Oversee and maintain the unity of the leadership teams.
- Remove obstacles preventing significant community contacts.
- Energize the planting teams for effective ministry.

CURRENT PROJECTS

RESTART/REVITALIZATION

- Tallmadge, OH . . . New Direction (Tim Ream)
- Gratz, PA . . . The Dwelling Place (Bob Stoner)
- Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)

PLANTS

- Allentown, PA . . . Horizon (Bud Daneker)
- Philadelphia, PA . . . Comunidad Biblica (Rolando Diaz)
- York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)

INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS / POTENTIAL ADOPTIONS

- Bethlehem, PA . . . Sunrise (Rick Sergi)
- Ephrata, PA . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
- Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
- Reedsville, PA . . . LifeTree Café (Jeff Byerly)
- Sinking Spring & Mohns Hill, PA . . . Lifetree Café (Jerry Artz, Mohn's Hill & Mike Snedeker, Sinking Spring)
- Harrisburg Area . . . missional outreach (Brian Parker)
- Boyertown Trinity . . . missional outreach (Rick Christman)

(Continued from page 1)

This is because a missional approach differs in mindset from a traditional church's corporate outreach. Instead of a group of people (i.e., the congregation) reaching out to its community (i.e., through Vacation Bible School), missional work encourages each



individual believer to look for specific people in his or her life who have no obvious church association. The believers pray for opportunities to form relationships and – eventually – share Jesus with them. The key is finding natural connections.

Christman found a natural way to turn his own personal hobby – smoking meat – into a chance to interact with the men in his neighborhood. “I teach them how to build their own [smokers] and how to smoke, which takes an enormous amount of time,” he explains. “We sit for hours and talk. It's a unique

Journey 53 meets for monthly celebrations, like this one in a leader's home. The time includes a celebration of those who have come to know Christ through the relationship-driven approach of this missional community.

opportunity for me to live life with these guys.”

Christman's wife,

Karen, finds her own opportunities by volunteering at an art school. “We've had many opportunities to minister to families there and to share the love of

Jesus with them,” he says. “It's not a forced thing.”

When recently surfing a missional web page, Christman read something that resonated with him and his work in missional community. “Jesus told us to go into all the world and be his ambassadors,” he says, noting that much of the modern church's work has shifted to a “come and see” approach instead. Missional work refocuses outreach on the word “go.”

“That really defines what missional is to me,” Christman says. “We don't come to church, we live the church.”

MISSIONAL CHURCH RESOURCES

For additional information on this approach, visit:

<http://www.Vergenetwork.org>

<http://jrwoodward.net/2008/11/a-primer-on-todays-missional-church/>

http://www.allelon.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=107&Itemid=102

Several good books are also available:

Missional Renaissance by Reggie McNeal

Shaping of Things to Come by Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost

Introducing the Missional Church by Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren.

COMMISSION MEMBERS • Bishop Rev. Bruce Hill • Rev. Leslie Cool, Associate • Rev. Ralph Owens, Secretary • Robert Barley • Tasha Byerly • Rev. Robert Daneker, Jr • Rev. David Dick • Rev. Nathan Fry • Rev. Jeffrey Martin • Rev. Ramon Mendez • Pam Ream • Rev. Michael Snedeker • Rev. Gary Brown (Great Lakes Region) • Rev. Gordon Lewis (Susquehanna Region) • Rev. Gary L. Kuehner (Delaware Region) • Rev. Randall Sizemore, Director of Global Ministries

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