

Prayer support critical in early days of congregation says mission developer

Series continues...

This issue of *Mission Partners Focus* continues our series on the stages of development of new congregations and the varying kinds of support needed at each stage.

We now focus on **infancy**—the first months after the arrival of the mission developer.

You will find additional information and photos at www.elca.org/implstories

Mission developer Glenn Zimbelman, pastor of Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, North Ridgeville, Ohio, says that Mission Partners' prayer support is critical in the early days and months of a mission congregation, as is help with finances, worship, and publicity.

Zimbelman developed this support in the first four to six months of his ministry while he was also engaging

the community to gain an understanding of the mission field.

Volunteers may choose to assist with occasional Sundays or events, says Zimbelman, or they may commit to every Sunday for a period, or become permanent members of the mission. Some members of Messiah Lutheran, Fairview Park, Ohio, for example, helped Spirit of Joy as part-time missionaries, while three joined the mission's praise band, which received equipment donated by another Mission Partner.

People are needed to provide the encouragement of a filled worship space, energy and vision, and worship assistance. Outreach volunteers, meanwhile, are important in knocking on doors, staffing booths at community events, and distributing literature.

Spirit of Joy's Mission Partners also have been encouraged by inviting Zimbelman to lead mission and evangelism classes and to guest preach. This helps demonstrate that existing congregations can benefit by adapting ministry practices from the mission congregations



Pastor Glenn Zimbelman officiates at Spirit of Joy's first baptisms in the American Legion Hall where the congregation worships.

that they support.”

Zimbelman adds that it is important for Mission Partners to provide consistent, long-term support, because it can take years for a mission congregation to become self-sufficient. “It is also necessary to be flexible. Mission congregations exist to bring non-churched people to God and require alternative ways of doing ministry.”

Spirit of Joy is fulfilling this mission since forming in January 2008 in one of the fastest growing areas of northeastern Ohio, and—with the support of its Mission Partners—plans to spread the joy even more! • www.spiritofjoylc.org

Keys to Support

ENCOURAGEMENT “Encouragement is the first kind of support needed, says one mission developer. For many people, mission development is an incredibly isolating experience. Initially, there is no building; there is no congregation. For a long period of time you feel

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As with many new congregations that originally meet in multi-use buildings, Spirit of Joy uses a trailer to store worship furnishings between services.

Our Mission *The ELCA Mission Partners program establishes reciprocal relationships between congregations of the ELCA so that all partners might become strong centers for mission. These connections include various types of support and may occur within the same synod or across synod boundaries.*



What is God's dream?

During the first months at a new ministry site, a mission developer will devote significant time developing relationships that will assess community assets and needs, getting to know those who may serve and be served by this ministry, and listening to the voice of God.

Those first months are a time of discernment. What is God's dream for this community? What is God already doing here? How is God working through other organizations and churches? Who are the people who already see and acknowledge the hand of God? What role might this new ministry play in implementing God's dream?

Won't you get involved? Read the stories of our mission developers—here and on our Web site (www.elca.org/implstories)—and let us know how you will help.

—Deaconess Marlys Waldo, Director for Support Networks, EOCM

Supportive synods, Mission Partners vital

Diedone P. Diela, mission developer of One-In-Christ Pan-African Worshiping Community, says the prayers, visits, connections, contributions, and facilities offered by supportive synods and partners are vital to the early growth of mission congregations.

“A Mission Partner can help in those first months by sending a team to meet and pray regularly with the mission congregation and develop a spiritual relationship,” said Diela. “They could offer suggestions, provide a vehicle to transport individuals to appointments, and help the mission developer network in the community. It would be great if the Mission Partner would assign members to work at the mission for a time and place the mission in their yearly budget.” ● www.oneinchrist-panafrican.org

*One-in-Christ
Pan-African
Worshiping
Community*
Telford, Pennsylvania



Mission developer Diedone P. Diela (in clerical collar) stands with a group of congregation members.

Keys to support *from p.1*

like you are just hung out there to dry. You need to hear from people that they care about you and are praying for you.”

MONEY. “Early on and even through organization, the developing ministry needs money for mass marketing. There is a huge challenge to getting the word out en masse. It's good to send out a major mailing before going door to door—sort of like John the Baptist preparing the way. Then there's PA equipment for projecting the voice, photocopiers for doing in-house print pieces, etc.”

REFERRALS. “Other local congregations can take responsibility for telling the mission congregation's story. They became advocates within their network of contacts.”

VOLUNTEERS. Local congregations can refer volunteers to help with Bible school, to provide special music, to just be in worship with the new start. And, if you have some really daring members, send them over to be trained to make door-to-door calls with the developer or members. It will be a significant gift, as well as training that might be useful in your own congregation as well.” ●

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ELCA congregations may reprint this newsletter in part or in its entirety.



Nava Jeevan's weekly Bible study and prayer fellowship is followed by a potluck agape meal.

Nava Jeevan means—and brings—'new life'

Pastor Edwin Fernando Arumanayagam is the mission developer of Nava Jeevan in Princeton, New Jersey.

Nava Jeevan
Princeton, New Jersey

When he began, local pastors gave a guided tour of the neighborhood, introducing him to the school district, housing patterns, business centers and restaurants where Indian and other South Asian folks congregate.

The demographics and personal observations provided the mission developer with tools for starting to meet people in the community. And, as he met people and had conversations with them, he invited them to Bible study and prayer groups, developing a core group of people to launch a church.

To begin strongly, Arumanayagam suggests that Mission Partners meet periodically with their mission congregations to coordinate schedules and activities and to follow-up on the mission congregation's progress and needs.

He says that Mission Partners can provide mission congregations with computers, good places to assemble, nursery toys and DVD's, Bible study materials, and song resources.

"Nava Jeevan" means "new life" in Sanskrit. It is a name of hope that can remind Indian immigrants of the new lives of equality that are theirs in Christ and away from the divisions of India's caste system. ●

Christ the King

Lapeer, Michigan

Mission congregation, Partner share gifts equally

Mission developer Nik Schillack recounts how a Mission Partner's invitation to Christ the King's members to discuss their evangelism strategy led the Mission Partner to increase its financial support by more than 50 percent after the presentation. The Mission Partner followed with a special appeal to its members to financially support the mission congregation's purchase of eight acres for a future mission center.

"In return," Schillack says, "we have supported this Mission Partner by periodically sending people to their congregation to share the evangelism tools that have been most useful to us." ●

www.christthekinglapeer.org

Glory Lutheran Church spreads God's glory

Pastor Newman Chiu, developer of Glory Lutheran Church, Torrance, California, is focusing on

Glory Lutheran

outreach to Torrance, California the local community and encouraging individuals in their faith journey. He suggests that



Pastor Chiu offers one-on-one discipleship training prior to baptizing a new Christian.

potential Mission Partners provide prayer and face-to-face encouragement. He also recommends that they "really know what a mission congregation needs. Ask, 'What can I do for you.'" ●

<http://glorylutheranchurchtorrance.blogspot.com> (in Chinese)



Room For All

"We wouldn't be here without the support of the ELCA and other congregations," said Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber, mission developer at House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver. "Our weird little congregation of 20-to-40-somethings is emerging in Denver's core, where church couldn't be more irrelevant to many people who had negative experiences in other congregations.

www.houseforall.org



Mission Builders

Couple has worked on 14 projects in past 16 years

My building experience before Mission Builders was a hog house and other farm projects,” said Mission Builders project manager John Moore. “Now, I work with congregational building committees, architects, sub-contractors, suppliers, and congregational and Mission Builders volunteers.”



Mary and John Moore

Moore and his wife, Mary, of Moses Lake, Washington, have served in Mission Builders since 1993. Their first project was at Creator Lutheran Church, Clackamas, Oregon, where John, a former county agricultural

extension agent, trained as a general laborer, “nail pounder,” and fork lift operator.

Two Mission Builders couples had introduced the Moores to Mission Builders while all worked with Lutheran Disaster Response following Hurricane Andrew in Florida.

The Moores have since worked on 14 projects from Alaska to Indiana: three initial facilities for mission congregations, two relocations, six additions, one hospice, one Habitat for Humanity house (with Thrivent and five Lutheran congregations), and one Lutheran youth camp project.

Said John, “The most challenging project as a manager was constructing log youth camp dormitories in Idaho’s Saw Tooth Mountains at a 7,200-foot elevation.”

Mary supports John by keeping records, performing



More than 70 members of Celebration Lutheran Church, East Wenatchee, Washington, worked with the Mission Builders on the first wall-raising for their facility.

household duties, and coordinating crew meals, snacks, and devotions with congregations.

“Mission Builders is a great way to serve God, and it supports Christ’s ministry,” she said. “We have developed more than 1,000 friendships. John and I feel that we receive many more blessings than we give.”●

www.elca.org/mb

ELCA Mission Builders are dedicated Christians who work for their Lord, helping congregations, schools, camps, and social ministry organizations of the ELCA build their facilities.

A typical project includes Mission Builders, members of the congregation, and various professionals working side-by-side.

While building structures, Mission Builders also build up the kingdom.

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