

# FELLOWSHIP NEWS

## BUILDING BRIDGES

### 2021 FEC Conference, "Building Bridges"

Bridges connect people and places. When FEC leaders across the nation and globe gather for the annual conference in July, they will discuss the need for building bridges in our communities. The 2021 conference theme, "Building Bridges," is designed to inspire awareness and change that will bring people together based on the teachings and life of Jesus, the master bridge builder.

Every year, FEC leaders assess the needs of churches across the fellowship as they plan the annual conference theme and invite speakers. President Rocky Rocholl pointed out that while our churches are theologically strong most church leaders need to understand how to bring people together in their communities since most communities experienced tension spurred on by discussions about race, politics, and culture in 2020.

This year, Brookside Church, Fort Wayne, will host 450 church leaders. The main sessions will be led by Dr. Walter Kim, the President of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and Dave Runyon, the author of *The Art of Neighboring*. Both

speakers will address the current divisions in our country and communities. In addition to the main session speakers, panel discussions and smaller breakout sessions will provide opportunities to learn practical ways to build bridges in our communities.

Dr. Walter Kim stepped into his role last year amid pandemic lockdowns, racial tensions, and a politically divided country. Kim, an expert on the theology of race, believes that when the gospel impacts lives, it will transform communities and change the culture ([NAE.net](https://nae.net)).

Dave Runyon, the co-founder and director of CityUnite, will address the practical ways that FEC leaders and churches can build bridges in their communities. In 2010, while serving as a pastor in Denver, he launched a neighboring movement that mobilized over 70 churches and 40,000 people. The movement has spread, and to date, over 1000 churches are using *The Art of Neighboring* resources ([Artofneighboring.com](http://Artofneighboring.com)).

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### Pine Hills Church Launches Freedom Ministry

On Saturday, March 13, 2021, 70 people gathered at Pine Hills Church for Experience Freedom. Led by a team of 25 volunteers, the one-day workshop addressed topics like extending forgiveness, healing emotional and spiritual wounds, identifying lies, and experiencing peace in relationships.

The Freedom Ministry event attendance proved that believers desire the abundant life that Jesus came to give them. Pastor Justin Sommer, who oversees the ministry, explained why a freedom ministry helps the body of Christ: "Everyone needs it. Too many Christians live forgiven but not free. The Freedom Ministry helps us realize all that is ours in Christ Jesus, and it helps us take back what the enemy has stolen, revive the dead areas in our lives, and restore/rebuild the things that have been destroyed."

The Freedom Ministry began in 2018 during a year-long series of messages about "Life in the Spirit." Lead Pastor Mike Drury emphasized that "when we walk in freedom we walk in fullness of power, fullness of joy, fullness of peace, and so much more." He explained, "When believers feel "stuck" in their spiritual journey, the Freedom Ministry team is equipped to come alongside, helping identify what may be causing negative emotions or lack of spiritual growth. Here, at PHC, we want to see as many people as possible living in freedom!"

### Burkina Faso Sends Church Planter to the Yalunka of Mali

Hudson Taylor, famed missionary to China said, "There are three indispensable requirements for a missionary: 1. Patience 2. Patience 3. Patience." The long-term results of mission efforts should be celebrated. For over 40 years, FEC has been planting churches in West Africa. Over time, that labor has resulted in helping to establish the Evangelical Mennonite Church (EMC) of Burkina Faso and, recently, a partnership with them to plant churches among the Yalunka.

For 10 years, FEC missionaries Steve and Pat Nelson worked in West Africa, reaching out to the Yalunka people of Mali. The Yalunka comprise a group of 214, 500 people living in four countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Mali (Peoplegroups.org). Because of the mountainous terrain and distance between villages, groups of Yalunka speak different dialects. When the Nelsens connected the believers in the southwest villages of Mali with church leaders in Burkina Faso, they discovered that the two groups shared a trade language. The trade language allows communication in a way that would not otherwise have been easy or even possible.

The church leaders in Burkina Faso are now leading the outreach to the Yalunka people in Mali, and they have sent a pastor to plant new churches in the region, Yaya Bengali, and his wife, Medina. About the mission effort, Siaka Traore, a long-time leader in the Burkina Faso EMC, said, "35 years ago we were the Yalunka."

