

# FELLOWSHIP NEWS



## FEC Partners to Distribute The African Study Bible

Consider the number of Bible translations available to English-speaking Christians. Additionally, consider the Bible study tools available in English, whether online or in print, to serious Bible students and pastors. Now, imagine that few of those tools exist in your native language. Resources for French speakers are more scarce, and African nations make up 70% of the world's French-speaking population. Geographically, those African nations comprise most of West and Central Africa. The Democratic Republic of Congo has the highest French-speaking population in the world—more than the nation of France. Pastors in those African countries need more resources to disciple their growing churches. One organization, Oasis International, has stepped in to provide *The African Study Bible* translation in French for pastors, and FEC is partnering with them to distribute it in two French-speaking, African nations.

The FEC International Multiplication Ministries Board (IMM Board) which gives oversight to cross-cultural initiatives and missionaries donated \$10,859 to Oasis International for the distribution and training costs for *The African*

*Study Bible* in Burkina Faso and The Democratic Republic of Congo. One board member, Tim Bertsche, the Missions and People Care pastor at Grace Church, Morton, Illinois, knows more about this initiative than most people since he grew up in the Democratic Republic of Congo while his parents worked as FEC missionaries there from 1949-74. He and his wife, Laura, who grew up in Cameroon, worked in Botswana for 15 years. Tim understands what this resource means for under-resourced, local pastors. That's why the IMM Board wanted to help distribute the first printing of 20,000 Bibles in nations where FEC has worked.

According to Oasis International (Oasisinternational.com), over 25% of the world's Christians live in Africa. "The number of Christians in Africa is growing faster than the number of leaders who are well equipped to disciple them." This four-year project contains more than 2600 features written by 350 contributors from 50 countries from a uniquely African perspective. An investment in this much-needed resource will impact future generations of believers in Africa and worldwide.



## Northwoods Launches The Ascent Church in Galesburg

A new church is reaching out to the Galesburg, Illinois, community: **The Ascent Church**. The campus was established by Northwoods Church, Peoria, in 2011, and today, it is still reaching the same community with the same values: Lifting up Jesus, teaching God's Word, being led by the Holy Spirit.

In 2018, Northwoods encouraged the site to become an independent church. That's when Dan Marlin, Jeremie Kilgor, and Andrew Wingo began to pray about the transition. All three men had already been working with either Northwoods Church or the Galesburg campus.

Just when all three men believed that God was leading them to plant the church, the Covid-19 pandemic closed churches for months. Finally, they were able to announce the transition in September, 2020, and people responded with enthusiastic applause.

In January, 2021, the team began the FEC-developed Target Analysis Process (TAP) to discover their mission to the Galesburg community. Jeremie Kilgor said, "It helped us to confirm and clarify where God is taking us and see where God is at work in our community." After the nine-month process, On September 19, **The Ascent Church** celebrated their first Sunday.

The new name, **The Ascent Church**, combines their passion for the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church just before He ascended into heaven (Matthew 28:18-20) and their core value of becoming a community of Spirit-led worshippers, like Jewish worshippers who sang the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120-134).

## FEC Churches Provide Sabbaticals for Pastors

Most pastors work long hours and regularly deal with difficult issues. The pandemic shutdown, racial strife, and political division of 2020 added more challenges. The statistics on pastor burnout reveal that "75% of pastors report feeling 'extremely stressed'" (soulshepherding.org). This summer, two FEC churches, Pine Hills Kendallville and Evermore Community, invested in their pastors by providing a sabbatical.

Pastor Ross Miller has been leading Evermore Community Church in Hartsville, Ohio, for 13 years, but he has served in full-time ministry for 35 years. Years ago, when leaders at a former church invited him to take a sabbatical, he said, "I realized how close to burn out I was." During his sabbatical this summer, Ross organized his time into three parts: Study, service, and vacation. For study, he read 12 books and attended a conference at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove. He also made time to serve various organizations in his community. He enjoyed a vacation with his wife, children, and grandchildren, and he hiked on the Appalachian Trail with some friends. With extended time to listen to God, he said, "I experienced God in a new and closer way. The quiet time was the most precious time."

Pastor Marc Buwalda launched Pine Hills Kendallville Church, Indiana, in 2015. After working through the challenges of leading a new church, he recognized his need for rest. During his sabbatical, he focused on physical rest, family time, and time with God. Marc said, "We spent lots of time together, watching movies and playing with Legos." By the end of his sabbatical, he said, "We came back energized with excitement for ministry."

Marc pointed out that a Sabbath rest isn't optional for believers. "It's something we all should practice, weekly." For church leaders, a sabbatical provides not only rest but also time to seek new vision and re-energize a passion for ministering to people.