

FELLOWSHIP NEWS



Church Planting Movement Sweeps Across Southern Africa

People are hearing the good news of Jesus Christ in Southern Africa through God's work in the Africa Church Planting Initiative (ACPI). Five years ago, the ACPI launched after Matt Boyers and Rocky Rocholl met with John Mutandwa in Zimbabwe to explore ways to bring more Bible-based doctrine to churches that had begun moving away from truth. Today, with the support of over 20 FEC churches, 60 churches have been planted across Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and, as of next month, Madagascar.

Eric Kabwata, Pastor of Missions and Outreach at Crossroads Evangelical Church in Wauseon, Ohio, joined the ACPI team in 2022 and recently returned from Africa alongside a team of leaders from FEC. During the visit, African church planters and leaders were trained in the use of the African Study Bible instead of the King James version. This specific version provides "examples and illustrations and commentaries with African context," says Eric, who moved to the United States from Zambia in 2012. His group then spent time hearing incredible testimonies about the work God is doing. "It's a movement that we are seeing."

One African man who previously spread false teachings came to a redemptive faith. He returned to the followers he had deceived, this time preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. With ACPI supporting him, this man is now leading people in his community to Christ. There are also many chiefs in very rural areas, where families often live on less than \$2 a day, learning about Jesus for the first time, Eric says. "Just to have somebody to explain to them what it means has opened the eyes of many people."

The ACPI plants four churches at a time in each region so these "clusters" can be spiritually and physically connected. There is also a "planter advocate" within FEC who connects regularly with the African church planters, encouraging them, passing along prayer requests, and advocating for their needs.

Matt Boyers and Eric Kabwata visit Africa every six to eight weeks, offering continued support and training to ACPI's leaders, planters, and pastors.

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Pine Hills En Español Growing in Fort Wayne, Indiana

In our fast-growing and diverse nation, God is bridging the gap between languages and cultures in Fort Wayne, Indiana with Pine Hills En Español, a Spanish ministry at Pine Hills Church. The Spanish Pastor, Hugo Reyes, who grew up in Venezuela, came to PHC to study church planting in 2021. God stirred him in another direction when his residency mentor, Colleen Senestraro said, "Hugo, your first language is Spanish. It's a blessing and a skill to be bilingual, so why don't we use that to be a ministry to the Spanish-speaking congregation?"

One week later, Hugo met a first-time visitor from Peru. She had many questions about the church, baptism, and faith, but previously had no one to ask. "That's when I understood there was a need," Hugo says. She eventually accepted Christ and got baptized. Today, this woman serves in Pine Hills En Español and is inviting others to attend. "It's a story of multiplication to see how the Lord brought her, and now she's bringing others."

What began as a monthly gathering on Sunday afternoons in 2021 has grown into a biweekly gathering of over 100 people from 14 different countries like Venezuela, Guatemala, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. They've developed small groups, a worship team, and ministries for children, youth, and marriages.

What excites Pastor Hugo about the future is "to see the kingdom of God expanding among the Hispanic community in Fort Wayne." They come to know the Lord, then begin sharing the gospel with their families back home. It is very much becoming a global mission field.



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Grace Community Fellowship in Hillsboro, Kansas Welcomes New Lead Pastor

Grace Community Fellowship celebrated God's faithfulness by welcoming Andrew J. Lewis as their new lead pastor in Hillsboro, Kansas last month. Andrew (AJ) brings many years of experience as a youth pastor and as an associate pastor, along with a passion to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to Hillsboro and Marion Counties. "Over half the people in these small towns don't attend church anywhere," AJ says. "We get to be part of a church that's pursuing people."

Originally from northern Ohio, AJ and his family stepped out in faith along with his family to apply for the lead pastor position. Since then, he has connected with and received much encouragement from the elder team at Grace. Jason Unruh, Elder, said God brought clarity about AJ just when the team needed it. Two very capable candidates were being considered which made it challenging to discern who to choose. Another elder told Jason, "I bet God will show us which one it is." The next day, the other candidate removed his name from consideration and AJ was chosen. "It was cool to see that God made the decision," Jason says.

After the previous lead pastor stepped away in March 2023, Jason witnessed God's faithfulness as people at Grace stepped up to help. Fifteen to twenty individuals within the church served to fill the many gaps, from a church secretary picking up more administrative tasks to someone coming out of retirement for volunteer support in the office.

AJ's first Sunday as lead pastor was February 11th. "The people of Grace Community Fellowship are a gracious, gracious people," he says. He described an excitement amongst the church body and was greatly encouraged.



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