



Spotlight on:

New Beginnings Christian Fellowship

The phrase “strength in numbers” took on new meaning to me as I was told about this community of believers in Kokomo, Indiana. The story starts about two years ago when this church was using a storefront rental to house services and no affordable place to move was yet available. Pastor Jeff received a call to meet with the leader of the Police Department (a Foursquare pastor) who shared that God had laid it on his heart to help this church get a building. He offered to rent out a building to them, allowing all the money



to go toward the purchase price of the building. He also offered to pay the utilities for the first year. Pastor Jeff knew this was God’s awesome provision and contacted Les Collins, director of CEIF, about a loan. Les traveled to Kokomo to see the building in question and to advise them about how to purchase it. Shortly after, a rental agreement was worked out, a Capital Funds Campaign was developed, and the church was moved into their new building. It was then that Pastor Jeff was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer in his neck.

Seeing to Pastor Jeff’s needs became the priority of this church. They “circled the wagons and held on for dear life” as Pastor Jeff affectionately recounted. Each day was a fight for survival...and a miracle.

Because of the stage of his sickness, Pastor Jeff was unable to work and nothing was done to provide the much needed maintenance to the building. From these severe tests of faith and hope came testimonies of even bigger stature, though. September of last year, Pastor Jeff **returned to work** and gives all thanks and praise to God as he seeks to live each day “not all stressed out” and “to make time count” even more than he did before battling for his life. That he **and** the church both survived, Pastor Jeff says, “is a **huge** thing”, and credits this to the church being healthy and having already “built a solid foundation as to what we’re all about”.

Since the building was in such need of repair, this church knew they couldn’t go at it alone. After contacting the Great Lakes Association Executive, Pastor Jeff was granted permission to request fellow churches to volunteer their services to remedy its condition. Pastor Jeff recounts from there:

In July we had many groups come from Michigan to help us. Youth from Napier Parkview Baptist Church in Benton Harbor, youth from North Pointe Baptist Church in Warren, men and women from Woodland Shores Baptist Church in Bridgman, and a gentleman from Oakridge Baptist Church in St.

Joseph all came. We even had people locally who just stopped by and helped. Along with those groups were a father and son from the Chicago area and two couples from Ontario, Canada. The people from Chicago and Canada are connected with a ministry in our church conference called Church Extension Investors Fund.



In order for such an event to take place, local churches and individuals offered lodging; and many local businesses provided

food for the workers. God helped us put something together that was very special and He worked mightily in our midst.

One special way God showed up during was through providing for a huge task set before us- a new roof. Even though many who



volunteered had worked on roofs before, we did not have many “experts” present. On our first day of roofing, a gentleman stopped by. He was a Christian brother who had just returned from a missions trip to Kentucky. With the fire of God burning in his heart, he joined

hands, heart, sweat, and skill with us every day. He provided expert advice, exceptional skill, excellent spirit, and extra help by bringing his co-workers along to help us. As we all worked together with a day and night shift, we completed the whole roof in less than four days. This gentleman has since worshipped with us a few times. We are allowing God to move in his life as he considers what God has in store for him. He was not a member of a church when he came to help and is praying for God’s guidance in his and his wife’s life.

Another project accomplished was painting the inside of our building. This was done by a friend of mine who is a local pastor, and Hans, a painter from Oakridge Baptist Church. We also had ladies from Woodland Shores Baptist Church as well as men from Canada help paint.

As the roof and painting were being done, youth were cleaning and sanitizing our carpets and fixing our chairs. They were also hard at work edging our sidewalks, mowing, and performing other yard work duties along with assisting the roofers and painters. The youth from North Pointe Baptist Church changed all our light bulbs to the florescent bulbs and accented our church with decorations. A couple of wonderful ladies from Canada fixed up my office with border paper that has a cowboy theme and hung pictures, making my office a very special place.

All this was done in harmony with the Spirit of Christ evident in so many ways. With roofing, painting, carpet cleaning, and yard work all being done at the same time, the potential for conflict was great, but the spirit of cooperation and consideration was genuine and, from my standpoint, wonderful to see and experience. It was a joy to behold and was definitely an encouragement to our church family. We could have not gotten this amount of work done in 2 to 3 years.



May God bless every person and group that had a part in our mission’s focus. Many came and worked, others simply prayed, and a few gave of their resources. Everyone was important and all were greatly appreciated. We now are able to put much of our focus on ministering to and equipping our people for ministry and to reaching out to our community. We praise God for the blessings He poured out on us through His people.

As told by Pastor Jeff Russell to Colleen Stegmann